



**North/West Lower Michigan Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Peace be with you!

Governor Whitmer has signed two new executive orders, the first amends Michigan's Safe Start Order and the second issues revised workplace safeguards. Starting July 31, statewide indoor gatherings will be limited to 10 people or less and, across most of the state, outdoor gatherings will be limited to 100 people or less.

As we have heard from our Governor and state health officials, the increase in COVID-19 cases is closely associated with spreading at large social gatherings. Locally, we have seen a gathering at a bar in East Lansing lead to 187 cases and a party at Torch Lake lead to at least 43 confirmed cases. Nationwide, the number of deaths from COVID-19 has surpassed 150,000 and we must continue to do our part in reducing the spread and impact of this virus.

Although a place of worship will not be penalized for willful violations of these orders, the ELCA does not support civil disobedience in this matter. We have a responsibility to protect our rostered ministers, congregation members, and the general public. We do this is by following the mandates from our Governor, maintaining social distancing, and wearing masks. As Christ so loved us, these are ways we can love one another in Jesus' name.

We all long for a full return to normalcy; however, we must remain vigilant in reducing the spread of this virus. We are still Church Together even when we are apart and our distance does not impact our ability to share God's love, peace, and grace with our neighbors. As we continue in these uncertain times, please know that I continue to hold you in my prayers.

*Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and rock of defense. Guide the leaders of our nation with your wisdom, comfort those in distress, and grant us courage and hope to face the future; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.*

- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

Peace,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop