



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
37 West Genesee Street
Skaneateles, NY 13152
The Rev. Paula E. Roulette, *Pastor*

March 24, 2020

Dear Family and Friends of Holy Trinity,

*Children of the heav'nly Father Safely in his bosom gather;
Nestling bird or star in heaven, Such a refuge ne'er was given.*

*God his own doth tend and nourish, In his holy Courts they flourish.
From all evil things he spares them, In his mighty arms he bears them.*

These first two verses of the beloved hymn, “Children of the Heavenly Father”, remind us that God gathers us together as God’s children, safely holding us close to God’s own heart. While this gathering is most often recognized in traditional means—such as attending a worship service at Holy Trinity—it is the Holy Spirit that God has given us in baptism that actually gathers us all as God’s daughters and sons, making us brothers and sisters to one another, whether we can see each other physically or not. You and I are still the Church, even as we are physically absent from one another.

In light of the alarming rate of confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus in NY state, Governor Andrew Cuomo delivered an address late Friday morning to all New Yorkers that effective Sunday, March 22, a “stay at home” order would go into effect at 8pm across the state. All non-essential businesses and employees, along with those vulnerable—age 70+ along with all those with compromised health—are strongly urged to stay indoors. On Friday afternoon, Pastor Paula participated in a ZOOM videoconference with Bishop Macholz and other pastors around the synod. He also stressed the importance of following the Governor’s directives. Sunday afternoon we learned that Skaneateles has two confirmed cases, and Auburn has one. The virus is now in our midst.

And so, as we continue to care and protect our brothers and sisters, the Council met last evening via ZOOM and has developed a plan forward for the congregation. These steps are:

1. Effective Tuesday, March 24, in compliance with Bishop Macholz and Governor Cuomo’s directives, the building of Holy Trinity Lutheran will closed until further notice. The most recent letters from Presiding Bishop Eaton and Bishop Macholz are posted on our website.
2. At this point, we will continue making the weekly sermon, scripture readings, prayers, announcements, and children’s pages available each Sunday morning online via email, church website, and Facebook. Hardcopies will also be mailed to those requesting them.
3. Be assured that Pastor Paula will continue to work and, with the Council, will be leading efforts to care for one another and remain connected across this faith community. Pastor is readily available Saturday thru Thursday (and Fridays for emergencies!) for communication (phone, text, and email). She will be working from home.

How can I help my congregation?

- Continue following the most recent CDC guidelines issued. This means wash your hands with soap thoroughly, at least for 20 seconds (the amount of time to pray The Lord's Prayer); practice social distancing by standing at least 6 feet apart from others; stay home if you are age 70+ or have a compromised health issue, and—regardless of age—when you are sick.
- Volunteer to take an active role in making phone calls to other members, helping alleviate the isolation we all are experiencing. Janet and Pastor Paula are working to develop a plan; several volunteer opportunities will be available.
- Follow Holy Trinity on the website www.htlutheranchurch.org and on our Facebook page, where you can find the sermon, prayers, readings, children's activities, and announcements.
- Check your email as the Pastor and Council share new developments as they arise.
- Please continue to financially support the ongoing church ministries through your regular church offerings. The mail will be checked frequently, with the offerings deposited weekly.
- Pray. Pray for the healing of our world. Pray for our country and government leaders. Pray for health professionals everywhere. Pray for our state and local governments. Pray for families and friends. One suggested prayer is: *God, our peace and our strength, we pray for our nation and the world as we face new uncertainties around coronavirus. Protect the most vulnerable among us, especially all who are currently sick or in isolation. Grant wisdom, patience, and clarity to health care workers, especially as their work caring for others puts them at great risk. Guide us as we consider how best to prepare and respond in our families, congregations, workplaces, and communities. Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern, and acts of service, trusting that you abide with us always. Amen.*

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20b As we wonder, and worry, about both the short and long-term havoc this global pandemic will have on our lives, may we be comforted by Jesus' promise that he will never abandon us in this crisis or any other. He is, and will always be, with us—to comfort, to encourage, to strengthen, and to love us. God in Christ Jesus joins us on this journey, walking with us and carrying us when we need him to do so.

Again, if you have any questions, please contact Pastor Paula or any member of Holy Trinity Congregation Council.

In Christ,

The Holy Trinity Congregation Council
Janet Schwenke, President
Lisa Ryan, Vice President
Karen Camp, Secretary
Tim Dobrovosky
Holly Falso
The Rev. Paula E. Roulette, Pastor