



May 13, 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Beloved Community of Olivet,

St. Paul often started his letters with thanksgiving and prayer, a faithful practice. Our prayer for you is that you are safe and well, and that your soul is at peace during these ongoing weeks of global crisis. The Risen Christ is with us, and the Holy Spirit's power holds and keeps us in God's grace. We can be grateful for this. As we now move into the third month of social distancing, the physical separation we feel is intensely present and our desire for in-person community grows. Although we long to be together, wisdom reveals that it is not yet time to do so. Physical distance perhaps increases our thanksgiving for each other.

For many weeks, the Olivet staff has struggled with the questions of how and when we may safely gather again for worship and other activities. Considering first the question of when, it will likely be many more weeks before we come together. Safety is of utmost concern. We will be following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and the North Dakota Department of Health by implementing a three-phase opening plan that corresponds with the number of days we see a decline in COVID-19 cases in Cass County.

We are also working through how to gather again within these three phases. Comprehensive and detailed plans are in order, and we are updating them as is appropriate. Our gatherings will not look the same for an unforeseeable amount of time. Scores of details are considered for each of the three phases, and we will communicate them to you at each juncture. Some of the many details include how we enter and exit the building, how we are seated for worship and the ways in which we receive Holy Communion. Even the question of how or if to serve coffee and donuts is in the mix. Our longing to be together is immense, and we will only do so when we reach a reasonable level of safety.

Toward the beginning of this outbreak, those who study organizations put forward the idea that those who can remain creative and flexible will come through this pandemic in the best possible fashion. Their words continually prove to be accurate. We will continue livestreaming our worship services, and actively seek and carry out ways to connect with one another. Through it all, God remains faithful and true. The Holy Spirit unites us in ways which transcend physical proximity. For this we are grateful.

God Bless You and Hold You in Safety,

Pastor Kris Gorden