



**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD** EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

Office of the Bishop

Kurt F. Kusserow, Bishop

412-367-8222

kurt.kusserow@swpasynod.org

9625 Perry Hwy.

Pittsburgh, PA 15237

July 16, 2020

Dear Pastors and Deacons,

The Lord be with you.

Yesterday Governor Wolf issued a new order that identified targeted restrictions to help contain the spread of the coronavirus in our state. Among them is a limit of 25 persons for indoor gatherings and a limit of 250 persons for outdoor gatherings.

I am writing to encourage you, along with your council or board, to respect this restriction in your ministry site, especially in regard to services of worship. Our primary motivation in restricting our indoor and outdoor gatherings for worship is the care of our congregation members and our neighbors. Beginning today, please do not hold indoor worship with more than 25 people or outdoor worship with more than 250 until we hear that the new restriction has been lifted.

I have heard our situation compared to a marathon, meaning that endurance and pace are more valuable to us right now than speed in achieving the final goal of being able to gather safely for worship. This is true; but unlike a marathon, the situation we find ourselves in does not have mile markers or a clearly established end point. I find it helpful to think instead of this being a time to attend to our way of life, which is always to love God and to love our neighbor as our primary response to any situation in which we find ourselves, for as long as that situation endures. Yesterday's announcement defines our situation yet again in a new way. Our way of life, now and always, is to respond with the grace and mercy we have received from our Lord Jesus, with care for our neighbors, and with trust that God's good and gracious will is being done in and through the challenges we face.

Thank you for your exercise of the ministry of the Gospel in this synod!

With you in Christ,

+ Kurt