

St. Mark's Lutheran Church Council
Guidance for Funeral Services during Covid-19 social limitation period
April 6, 2020

The health, safety and well-being of the members and friends of St. Mark's Lutheran Church is one of the highest priorities of the Council. As recommended by the CDC, St. Mark's is following social distancing guidelines to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Currently our worship services, educational events and meetings are being held online, allowing us to continue connecting in worship and fellowship until we can safely resume our standard practices. In this time of uncertainty, we must continue to consider new protocols to balance care and separation for one another.

If someone within our congregation passes away, how does our love of neighbor, our collective need to grieve and honor the deceased, and the counsel of medical experts inform our actions?

As members of St. Mark's our desire is to console one another in person. The Church Council has wrestled with how to express this grief, honor, and consolation all while protecting family members, friends and our Pastor in the current context.

The Council has agreed:

- to instruct Pastor Joe and all members to utilize digital tools (phone, e-mail, video) to maintain connections with one another, including hospital visits, and connection before, during, and after the death of a loved one.
- to defer all in-person gatherings for funerals until it is medically safe to hold such gatherings.
- to utilize electronic media to inform and connect our St. Mark's community in mourning and support for those grieving.
- to instruct Pastor Joe to be present fully but only through electronic means with individuals and families reaching out for pastoral care, including presiding at funerals and grave-site committals for families who choose to bury their loved ones in the context of the current safety directives.

We trust God is present and guiding our ministry at St. Mark's in the midst of fear, uncertainty, and loss. We accept our responsibility to reach out to, protect, and encourage one another. For any questions on this Guidance, please reach out to a St. Mark's Council Member by phone or email. Contact information is available through the church office by email request to admin@stmarkslutheranfargo.com or by telephone to (701)235-5591.

Blessings,
St. Mark's Lutheran Church Council

Romans 14:7-8 (NRSV): We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.