

Dear Living Word,

*One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’<sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:35-40*

In light of the uptick in COVID-19 cases in Lyon County, Marshall Public Schools going to distance learning for two weeks, and the new executive orders from Gov. Walz, we feel the need to respond as a church. There are two things we want you to be aware of as we go forward. First, we know that school administrators, teachers, staff, and students are all stressed. We want to do our part to help them return to in-person learning as soon as possible. In an attempt to help, we are canceling all **in-person** Sunday School, Confirmation, and Ignite until further notice. Once Marshall Public Schools have returned to in-person learning, we will do the same. We will be sending you lessons for at-home Sunday School as well as video lessons for Confirmation and Ignite. You should have already received emails from Jaci and Joe detailing what we will be offering you to help pass faith on to your kids during this trying time. We hope that they will be able to return to class as soon as possible and look forward to a time when we can see your kids face to face!

Second, we also want you to be aware that we will continue to have Sunday morning church services, but we are asking that you wear your masks and be diligent in social distancing. It’s SO tempting to take off your mask during church, but in light of all the cases and its impact on our schools, we are requiring that you wear your masks throughout the church service. I know that this is NOT ideal. That being said, a number of churches in Marshall are not meeting at all and have gone completely online for various reasons. However, we feel that meeting is important – even necessary – as long as people are safe. In an effort to continue meeting and minimize the risk of infections, **we are going to require that all people who come to our in-person worship services on Sunday morning both wear a mask for the entire service and physically distance from others.** This will help us to both continue in-person worship and keep the COVID-19 numbers down.

We want to remind you, if you have any symptoms or if you have secondary issues that put you at a higher risk should you contract COVID-19, please stay home and join us online. Remember, you can watch the worship services via livestream or replay on our YouTube channel. However, if you choose to worship with us, that means we all must abide by the mandates and be better at wearing our masks and social distancing while we meet. We are very thankful that we are free to worship Jesus and that spiritual growth is still happening in powerful ways, even during these struggles. Praise God! We want to meet as a church and have all of this behind us. We want our schools to be in-person. We want you all to be safe and well. So, together let’s make an effort to minimize the effects of this virus and continue to maintain as much normal life as possible. Thank you for being patient and for helping us as we seek to serve and love our neighbors and Jesus.

In Christ,

Pastor David A. Christensen