



April 27, 2020

Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
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Wisconsin Supreme Court
110 E. Main St., #440
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Supreme Court,

The Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin is an advocacy ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We support the health and well-being of Wisconsinites by supporting just public policies. Usually, that takes the form of addressing proposed legislation. In this highly unusual time of a pandemic, we find ourselves studying and tracking Governor Evers' executive orders and information from our state and federal health care professionals who are determining when it is safe for us to return to business as usual. We supported Order #12 and now support Order #28 to extend Safer at Home.

In relation to making decisions about sheltering in place, the first question to worshipping communities should not be whether or not they are meeting the spiritual needs of their members, but if their lives and the lives of others would be at risk by attending worship in person. We happen to know that the spiritual needs of people are being tended to as best as possible online and via television, radio, and the telephone during this time. As the curve flattens and health professionals determine that it is becoming safer to return to worship, then the question is how to practice safe distancing as we gradually return to worship in person.

It is interesting that Order #28 should be a matter for the Wisconsin Supreme Court, causing us to question if the pandemic has become a launching ground from which partisan groups are moving forward to try to consolidate power. The governor and DHS are working within their realm of authority, just as the legislature worked within its realm to decide on keeping April 7 as election day, even though that has led us to discovering correlations between people infected with the coronavirus and having voted or worked at the polls on April 7. We ask that you honor the authority of the governor.

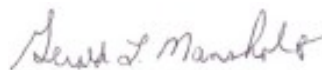
I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence.

–Martin Luther, 1527 letter, “Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague”.

Sincerely,



Bishop James Arends
La Crosse Area Synod



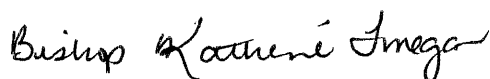
Bishop Gerald Mansholt
East Central Synod of Wisconsin



Bishop Paul Erickson
Greater Milwaukee Synod



Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin



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Northern Great Lakes Synod



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