



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

May 14, 2020

Pastoral Message regarding the WI Supreme Court Safer at Home Ruling from Six Bishops

Bishop Jim Arends, Bishop Paul Erickson, Bishop Katherine Finegan, Bishop Gerald Mansholt,
Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson, Bishop Peter Rogness

Dear friends in Christ,

On May 13, 2020, the Wisconsin Supreme Court lifted the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Safer at Home extension. However, nothing has changed in our level of concern about contracting and spreading the coronavirus via worship and other gatherings in our churches.

The court decision was based on a contested legal point, and not on any change of the need for caution and safety that the pandemic has brought upon us. Counsel from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a wide range of additional medical experts, the ELCA's guidelines, and other government entities continue to stress the need for restricting all gatherings to under ten people and attendant safeguards such as distancing, masks, etc.

In the midst of confusion after the court's ruling, we ask that you remain steadfast in taking precautions to not contract or spread the virus. Please follow the counsel and recommendations stated in the May 12, 2020 ELCA document, Considerations for Returning to In-person Worship.

We in the Church need to continue to be guided by scripture, our theology, and the best scientific knowledge we can gather. We stand in unity to prioritize the safety and the well-being of all of our members as we continue in community.

Yours in Christ,

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

Bishop Katherine Finegan
Northern Great Lakes Synod

Bishop Peter Rogness
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin