



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

Minnesota South District

... cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God

March 16, 2020

Dear Early Childhood Administrators,

Saturday evening, I went to church and heard a wonderful sermon on the Christian's response to Coronavirus. Pastor Klaus took Martin Luther's letter on a pastor's response to the Black Death (Plague) and put it into the context of our modern world. Essentially, our response is threefold:

1. **We should pray.** Pray for the sick, for our healthcare workers, for those working on cures, for ourselves. (**Psalm 145:18, Hebrews 4:16**)
2. **We should prevent and protect.** Do the things that will keep us healthy and able to do the Lord's work. Observe quarantines and the orders of those in authority. Wash hands / use sanitizer. If sick, stay away from others and take medicines to get better.
 - **Romans 8:21-39** Nothing will be able to separate us from Christ's love
 - **Romans 14:8** Whether we live or die, we belong to the LordWe need not fear because God needs us, one way or another . . .
3. **We need to help.** There are those who will need us in our community. We are called to do acts of mercy and kindness and to share Jesus' love in the madness of a world where people are frightened. (**John 13:34**)

I pray that these three principles will guide you as you move forward in leading your center through the next weeks and months.

Minnesota schools are closed for school-based learning for the next two weeks, and likely much longer. Meanwhile, childcare has been designated as an essential public service, and children of first responders and healthcare workers will need care. Other parents (some that work for you) now have children at home rather than at school and are looking for solutions. See the following documents for more details:

[Governor's letter to Child Care Providers \(3.15.2020\)](#)

[Communication to Child Care Providers Following Executive Order 20-02 \(3.15.2020\)](#)

Each Lutheran early childhood program will need to assess your response based on your program, staff, and policies and then decide what you can do in this developing situation. Essentially you can decide to stay open and operate as you are now, to stay open in a more limited scope, or to close.

Things to consider in your decision making:

- How are your parents being impacted by all of this? Review your fee collection policy . . . Do parents contract for the year, the month, the week, or pay as needed? Would they have any tuition refunds or credits? What income sources do you have?
- Find out what is going on with your staff. How are they being impacted by all of this? Review your contract situations, PTO policies, and payroll responsibilities should you close for a period of time.
- If you are a nine-month program, could you suspend your program now and extend later?

- Does your insurance cover lost income while your program is closed? Would your program qualify for state assistance? The [Communication to Child Care Providers Following Executive Order 20-02](#) states:
“State agencies are exploring options to provide emergency financial resources to support providers who remain open or experience financial loss due to closure related to COVID-19. As these options are made available, we will be communicating with you and will aim to make it as easy as possible for providers to access emergency capital and other resources during this difficult time.”
- In the spirit of our Christian duty to our neighbor, are you able to provide essential and / or needed childcare for families while keeping yourself and staff reasonably safe?
- If you close, could you connect families in need of childcare with your workers that you are unable to pay?
- Should we provide care only for children of healthcare workers and first responders (as public schools are doing)? If you have families at your school that are first responders or healthcare workers and need childcare, consider if this is something your center could do to provide help for those families. This is a difficult time—perhaps you can be the place where they have some stability. If you do this, you will also need to consider how you will handle children and staff that are sick (get expert advice). Make sure your care includes the reason we are different—our faith, prayer, devotion, Bible, and a law-Gospel approach.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!!!!

- There are people that are frightened out there, including among your staff, students, and their families. **People in fear need the Gospel more than ever.**
- See Kim Marxhausen’s blog post on how to help parents with young children explain COVID-19 to their children here → <http://faithparent.marxhausen.net/2020/03/normal-0-false-false-false-en-us-x-none.html>
- A good resource to keep principals connected to parents and students is BombBomb video email www.bombbomb.com. BombBomb is providing video email services free of charge to all schools (teachers, administrators, superintendents, etc.). A nice component of BombBomb video email is that it tracks who actually opens your email—you know if they are receiving or ignoring.
- Provide tips for parents on how to educate their children at home.
- As time goes on, develop a system to intentionally check in on your center’s families. Are they well? Do they need anything? How can your staff / congregation help? How can the staff / congregation be praying for them?

If you remain open . . .

- Consider posting a person at the entrance to measure temperatures of every staff member and child entering the building. If they have a temperature of 100.4°F or above, they may either not enter until they have a doctor’s note, or enter into your “sick area” procedures.
- Follow the newly updated [CDC Guidelines for K-12 schools and Childcare](#) (March 13, 2020)
- Consider requiring any child or employee with a household member that has traveled to high infection concentration areas to be excluded from the program for 14 days. This list is not all inclusive and may change over time: Europe, China, NYC, Washington State, California.
- Begin discussions with any employee scheduled to take vacations within the next 30 days about the risk of exposure and possibility that they will be barred from returning to work after they travel for a period of 14 – 30 days as this is a dynamic, fluid, and evolving situation. Most employees will not be able to afford to be without pay for 14 – 30, so foregoing their trip may be prudent.

Lutheran resources

- Be sure to check out the Synod's school resources site:
<https://www.luthed.org/2020/03/12/covid-19-resources/>.
- Get yourself on the **#luthed.org Facebook group**. Lots of good discussion and suggestions.

As always, we are here to support you. You are in our prayers as you move forward into these uncharted waters. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if we can help in any way.

Peace in Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean', written in a cursive style.

Sean Martens

Assistant to the President for Education
Minnesota South District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod