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*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;* [Ecclesiastes 3:1-5]

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ;

As our nation and our world grapples with the challenge of the COVID-19 virus, we find that we, as a congregation, are also wrestling with how to best address the spread of this virus here in Minnesota and, potentially, in Rothsay. The New Life Council met following the worship service today. We reviewed recommendations from the ELCA, the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA, and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz. **After much discussion, we have decided to cancel our Lenten supper and worship service this Wednesday, March 18, as well as the worship service scheduled for Sunday, March 22.** The New Life Council is hoping to have more and better information available to them within the next week to make further decisions going forward. **The Council also decided to cancel Sunday School and Church Youth Activities until Rothsay Public School resumes in person classes.**

While we will not, in a sense, be embracing in worship for this (hopefully) brief period, Pastor Randy will be in the office and available to make visits and provide Holy Communion to anyone making such a request. In addition, Pastor Randy, through the technological genius of John Reber and his wizardry, will make available online devotionals/sermons for Wednesday and Sunday, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, respectively. Written copies will be available for delivery to those who do not have online access. Patrice's office hours will vary during this time as well; please call or email the church office with any questions or updates for the newsletter/bulletins and also to make sure someone is available before heading in.

The New Life Council is also quite concerned about those who are considered most vulnerable to this virus and its repercussions on our local community. We would like those individuals and families to know that, should you choose to self-quarantine yourself, we will have people available to shop for and deliver to you, food, medicine, and other necessities. Others might be feeling the crunch from financial setbacks due to the virus. The church might be able to help out with some necessities. In either case, feel free to give our church office or Pastor Randy (701-238-1863) a call, a text, or an email.

While we all will likely feel pinched by the uncertainty of this health crisis and its repercussions, the Council is asking everyone to remember that without funding, the church has a hard time addressing the needs of its members, especially the most vulnerable. So, as best you can, please remember the church, Christ's mission, as you administer your finances. Please make it a priority. It's awfully easy to give into that small, but loud voice that says, "We don't know how bad it's going to get or how long it will last. We've got to tighten the purse strings. The church is just going to have to wait." It's a lot harder to trust in that great, but seldom listened to voice that says, "Remember, I am with you always. [Matthew 28:20b]

Thank you for your faithfulness, until that time when we again are able to embrace in worship!

The New Life Council

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Our Mission: "Disciples of Jesus Growing Disciples of Jesus"