

Beloved Lutheran Center Students,

We regret to inform you that The Lutheran Center will not be holding in-person worship this week, and we are canceling the snack-nic scheduled for Sunday following worship. I understand this is disappointing for many of you; it is disappointing for us, too.



As you know, yesterday the University of Nebraska-Lincoln released COVID 19 numbers for the UNL community for the first time. The University shared that there are 107 confirmed cases since the beginning of the semester out of 889 tests—a positivity rate of 12%. The positivity rate is especially troubling. For a point of reference, the positivity rate in Lancaster County has been hovering just under 7% the last couple of weeks. Lancaster County is reporting a sharp increase in their numbers this week, as well—with a causal link to the increase in cases on campus. According to an article published yesterday in the Lincoln Journal Star, “The 95 UNL-related coronavirus cases over the past week account for 38% of the 249 cases reported in Lancaster County.” Also concerning are reports that, “students are advising others not to be tested for COVID-19 or if tested, not to report it or comply with contact tracing efforts...” (Next@Nebraska email, August 23). Finally, we were notified yesterday that one of our student leaders is entering quarantine following close contact with someone who tested positive for the virus.

Despite the attempts of many students to carefully follow mitigation procedures, it appears that UNL is following the troubling trend of many other colleges and Universities nationwide with significant spikes occurring only days or weeks after in-person activities begin.

At The Lutheran Center we deeply value our call to love our neighbors. Although there is something life-giving that is lost when we cannot worship in person, we privilege the health and safety of our students, staff, and all who come into contact with them. Our fast from in-person worship is a fast for the sake of our neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable. Both in-person worship services we held this semester had nearly forty persons in attendance. At this time, it would be irresponsible to continue mass gatherings of this size—even with social distancing measures—on campus.

Until such time as the daily number of new cases at UNL is equal to or less than 10 people (based on the weekly average) and the positivity rate is under 7% we will not return to in-person worship on Sunday mornings. In the meantime, we will offer online worship gatherings at 12:30pm on Sunday mornings, and at 9:15pm on Wednesday nights.

For the time being, Hives (small groups) can continue to meet either online or in person. Although if Hives do choose to meet in person, we more strongly recommend that these gatherings remain outdoors, and all participants remain masked, strictly maintaining 6-foot separation. Morning prayer will continue in-person but will be moved from the basement of St. Marks to the outdoor courtyard. Finally, Pastor Adam and Vicar Emma will continue to be available for one-on-one in person meetings, and may be available for outdoor office hours.

The staff and leadership at The Lutheran will continue to pray for you, for staff, faculty, and students in Lincoln. And we will continue to seek appropriate solutions for worship and fellowship that are consistent with our calling to love and serve our neighbors.

Rev. Adam White, Campus Pastor  
Amanda White, Ministry Director  
Vicar Emma Grinde, Seminary Intern