

**SIERRA EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**MONDAY MESSENGER - June 8, 2020**

*Report from SELC COVID-19 Response Team:*

We love all of you. We miss all of you. We very much want to gather again like we're used to doing in "being church together." We thank you for your patience and understanding. We also love you too much to take what we have assessed is an undue risk of re-starting in-person worship yet. As Jim Cleven of our Response Team put it, any time frame we might suggest for starting in-person worship is "not a *calendar* date but a *wellness* date."

And that marker of "wellness" has definitely not yet been reached. In fact, if anything it is pushed further out as we see that, here in Cochise County, as of today, June 8, 2020, there are 146 confirmed cases and 5 deaths, out of 26,889 total confirmed cases and 1,044 deaths in all of Arizona. This is a significant increase and climbing trend from previous weeks (data taken from <https://covid-cochisehealth.hub.arcgis.com>). In addition, in the Saturday, 6/6/20, Arizona Daily Star, Page B1, "the chief clinical officer at the state's largest network said Friday that Arizona is headed to a health crisis if residents don't change their habits to deal with COVID-19... Dr. Marjorie Bessel said the intensive-care units at the Maricopa County hospitals for Banner Health already are at full capacity. And other hospitals in Arizona are rapidly approaching that point."

We recognize that many churches in Sierra Vista have already resumed some type of in-person worship. We know that at least a few SELC folks have attended worship at one of those churches. So, it is natural to wonder why our church has not also done so. Yet it must also be recognized that the Presbyterian, Methodist and Episcopal churches have not resumed in-person worship nor have almost all of our sister Sunrise/Santa Cruz Conference churches. We cannot speak to why other churches have chosen to restart in-person worship. We can say that the Governor's office still calls this Phase I of the pandemic response, that part of that response recommends refraining from large group meetings, and that, in her May 28<sup>th</sup> email, Grand Canyon Synod Bishop Hutterer said, "I would sum up the guidance to churches in one, simple phrase: 'Just because you can gather for worship, doesn't mean you should'... I have encouraged that there be no in-person gathering until the deaths or cases of newly infected decrease for a minimum of 14 days. At that point, small groups under ten could begin to gather. After 28 days of decrease, groups of less than 50 could begin to gather." (See our church website to read the whole letter).

While we hope and fervently pray that the trends start going back down to allow for more proactive planning for in-person worship, in the meantime we are exploring ways to minister better and more effectively now. We are, of course, still continuing to live-stream our worship services and classes, like Intern Pastor Paul's excellent Education Modules as part of the Navajo Project. We hope to start a Zoom SELC "coffee hour" following worship once these classes are concluded. We are expanding our telephone care to members, especially those who live alone. (If you're interested in a trusted and caring SELC leader calling you regularly, or helping us call one another, let us know!). Our youth continue meeting via Zoom and possibly in periodic outdoor activities, like a hike. Our Response Team and our Worship and Music Team are researching resources we'll need when we do come back into the sanctuary, such as sanitizing stations and individually packaged communion cups and wafers, among other things.

When the trends stabilize more, we are also considering holding an early Sunday morning outdoor worship experience at a local park, practicing distancing and other precautions. We also urge everyone to keep observing CDC guidelines like wearing masks, frequently washing hands, physically distancing, and remaining at home if you're over 65 years of age and/or have health issues.

Given these realities, we are also asking you to let us know what YOUR needs might be at this time. What can we help with? What particular challenges could we help meet? Do you need someone to shop for you? To call you? And when WOULD you feel comfortable coming back into the sanctuary for in-person worship, knowing also there would be a lot of restrictions to follow then, e.g., only 40+ allowed at a time, wearing masks, no singing, physical distancing, etc.? Call or email the church office or one of our leaders to let us know your thoughts!

This is indeed a hard and challenging time for us all, especially now with the added social unrest happening around the world. But, as the Body of Christ, we are connected and committed to love and serve God and all people no matter what. We aren't physically connected like we want but we ARE spiritually connected through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is a power which no virus, no fear, and no threat of any kind can diminish nor defeat. Trusting in that Pentecost Power, we move forward with patience, endurance and trust in a faithful God along with the love and support of one another.

*Your SELC COVID-19 Response Team: Larry Rewis, Jim Cleven, Lynn Light, Leslie McCourt, Becky Randall, Sandy Stephenson, Joanna Michelich, Beth Dechant, Mignonne Hollis, Intern Pastor Paul Benz, Linda Perry and Pastor Mark Perry. (We meet again July 1<sup>st</sup>.)*

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## WOMEN'S CIRCLE NEWS

It is an honor to announce that our Women's Gather magazine along with its publisher, Women of the ELCA, won a total of 22 awards for 2019 communications work from the Religion Communications Council and the Associated Press. With that being said, do not miss the June, July and August Bible Study written by the Reverend Dr. Christa Compton and Rev. Gladys Moore. This is so timely! It concerns "Just Love" in family, community and the nation. I am hoping that we will sometime soon be able to gather to study a session together. - Linda Radwick

# FAITH5

Every Night In Every Home!

Our FAITH5 verse of the week is  
Psalm 8:2

<sup>2</sup>you whose glory is chanted above the heavens out of the mouths of infants and children; you have set up a fortress against your enemies, to silence the foe and avenger.

*(Post or keep this weekly scripture in a handy place and every morning or evening share the following as a couple, or with family members in the home or even with a dear friend over the phone.)*



Share your highs and lows of the day with one another.



Read the verse of the week and if time permits, the Bible story that pertains to the Scripture of the week.



Talk about how the Bible reading might relate to your highs and lows of the day or how it's speaking to you.



Pray for one another's highs and lows and other prayer requests.



Bless one another. Make the sign of the cross on each other's forehead or the palm of your hands and say something simple such as: "God bless you and keep you in His love and care!" Or feel free to make up your own blessing that incorporates a part of the FAITH5 verse of the week.

## SUNDAY LECTIONARY DAILY READINGS

The readings are chosen so that the days flowing out from Sunday (Monday through Wednesday) reflect upon that Sunday's readings. The days leading up to Sunday (Thursday through Saturday) prepare for the next Sunday readings.

### Monday

Psalm 40:1-8  
Leviticus 15:25-31; 22:1-9  
2 Corinthians 6:14-7:2

### Tuesday

Psalm 40:1-8  
Hosea 8:11-14; 10:1-2  
Hebrews 13:1-16

### Wednesday

Psalm 40:1-8  
Hosea 14:1-9  
Matthew 12:1-8

### Thursday

Psalm 100  
Exodus 4:18-23  
Hebrews 3:1-6

### Friday

Psalm 100  
Exodus 4:27-31  
Acts 7:35-43

### Saturday

Psalm 100  
Exodus 6:28-7:13  
Mark 7:1-13

### Sunday

June 12-18  
Exodus 19:2-8a  
Psalm 100  
Romans 5:1-8  
Matthew 9:35-10:8

Be Creative!