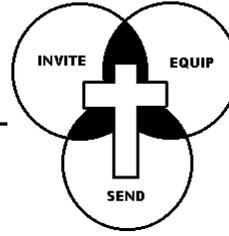

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Friday, January 28, 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some of you are aware that I have been battling some non-covid health issues that have kept me off my regular schedule for the past couple of weeks. After several weeks of symptoms and a week of doctoring, we believe we know with what we are dealing. I have three clusters of enlarged lymph nodes in my neck, in my chest area, and in my lower abdomen that have been identified by ultrasound and a CT scan. Every conversation I have had with a doctor or clinician related to my symptoms and this imagery has included the words "suspected" or "probable" lymphoma. Corresponding blood work continues to point to this reality, as well.

There is plenty about this that we do not know yet. Top of the list is WHAT KIND of lymphoma this actually is. Nor do we know what stage it is. This past Thursday, January 27, I underwent an ultrasound-guided needle biopsy that, over this next week to ten days, will begin to fill in the blanks for these things we don't yet know and also begin to direct us toward the best options for treatment and being healed of this.

There is also a lot we don't know in terms of how this will impact my role in our congregation's mission and ministry. Right now, apart from the initial mental and spiritual impact of this news, I have noticed myself becoming fatigued earlier in the day over nothing. There has been some stomach pain issues that have kept me hobbled, as well. And because of where some of these enlarged nodes are and how they are pressing in my back, my sleep has been spotty at best, which only exacerbates everything.

Our council leadership and I have had initial conversation with Bishop Amy Odgren and one of her assistants, Deacon Brenda Tibbetts, and already, they are assembling some resources that will provide us some options, should my presence become that much more impacted.

Pastor Ralph Egbert will certainly fill a role here and there.

Pastor Paul Brown, our colleague and partner at Immanuel, is on stand-by for emergency, on-call situations.

As we continue to try to fill in the blanks, here are some of the most helpful ways I would invite you to respond positively to this news:

- 1. Pray.** Pray for my own and my family's peace and wellness as we grapple with these realities. Pray for the doctors and nurses and clinicians committed to my care and wellness, for their knowledge, skill, care and compassion. Pray for my healing. And continue to pray for all those in need of healing on our prayer list. Prayer matters.
- 2. Please be patient, positive, and encouraging when it comes to how this is communicated and updated within the congregation.** We will fill the congregation in with all the appropriate updates, as we learn of them ourselves. An excellent suggestion that came out of council is to put together an update schedule (probably Sundays) so that you can expect to hear of these regular updates, both with respect to my health as well as how this impacts our congregation. In the meantime, I and my family will be trying to journal regularly on a Caring Bridge website, which you can find at www.caringbridge.org/visit/mikepancoast.

I know you will have not only questions, but expressions of encouragement and support. But I want to ask you to limit your phone calls to me at this time. Texts and emails are great. But as difficult as it may be, please try to rely on the regular updates through our usual communication channels, on Sunday mornings, and through the Caring Bridge website. Trust me: I know how difficult the waiting part can be.

3. **Please pass on only what is known and communicated; not what is speculative or rumored; and please correct the speculative and rumored when you hear it with the latest and best updates or from the Caring Bridge site.**
4. **Please continue to respond in and through our congregation in generous and supportive ways.** Since we have sought to return to some sort of “covid normalcy,” we have continued to wrestle with the needed servant response in general and on Sunday mornings (ushering; table-setting; offering counting; serving coffee; and the like.) **The Church is not the pastor; the Church is the beautiful, mysterious, sometimes messy reality of everyday people responding to Christ's presence in Word and Sacrament through their own lives offered as gifts of care and presence.** WE NEED PEOPLE TO HELP FILL IN THE GAPS. WE NEED **YOU.**
5. **Please mask up when we're together in the building.** Of course, all of this is also complicated by covid realities. Once we identified what was in my body through this past Friday's ultrasound and Monday's CT scan, I have quite intentionally been scarce, lest a positive covid test slow down finding out with what exactly we're dealing; what the treatment will be; and beating it. As I continue to try to be present, at the very least, for Sunday morning worship, you can partner with me on this journey by electing to wear a mask.

Never in a thousand years could I have imagined that this what I would be facing. And yet at the same time, why not me?

Though I have most assuredly had some moments of fear and worry, even this early on in the process, my faith is grounded in the promises Jesus has given to me in his Word and attached to the waters of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Those are promises that extend beyond life itself.

Thank you for your love and prayers.

Pastor Mike and Family

Psalm 144:1-2a, *“Praise be to the LORD my rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge...”*