Dear 2020-2021 8th and 9th grade confirmation students and families,

Blessings to you in this very strange and tumultuous year. As we approach fall, our staff and committees have been hard at work making a plan for a safe and fun year of learning and growing in faith for confirmation students here at Faith Lutheran.

Due to the continuing health concerns posed by COVID-19, we have made some changes for the upcoming confirmation year. Our first priority is the health and safety of our youth. To that end, **we are moving to a small group model for confirmation this year. There will be three small groups (A, B, and C), each with no more than 8 students. Each group will meet on Wednesday night on a separate week from 4:30pm to 6:00pm** (see attached schedule) to allow for physical distancing in our classroom and to minimize the number of students together at one time. Please note that **students will be expected to wear masks while in the church building and during confirmation class.** Students may not attend in-person confirmation if they, or anyone in their household, are sick or have had a known close contact exposure to COVID within the past 14 days.

Students will still be expected to connect with their confirmation mentor at least 4 times over the course of the year. These meetings may be in-person with physical distancing, or via phone or video call (with parent approval).

**We recognize that some families may not be comfortable with in-person confirmation instruction at this time.** If this is true for your family, please call Pastor Sylvia (701-223-2236) **as soon as possible.** We will arrange an online option for you, but it will help us to have numbers for this as soon as possible.

Some of the regular expectations for confirmation will also be adjusted this year. In lieu of the required service hours (often done through serving pizza), we will be asking our students to write notes to members who live in nursing homes or assisted living periodically throughout the year. All materials will be provided.

Instead of acolyting and serving communion, we will be asking students to complete 3 additional worship notes, for a total of 15 for this year. Whether attending in-person worship or online worship, students can still complete the sermon note requirement by using the form found on our our website ([faithbismarck.com](http://faithbismarck.com)) under Resources - Forms and emailing them to [kenny.bisfaith@midconetwork.com](mailto:kenny.bisfaith@midconetwork.com). If students are interested in assisting with worship instead of doing the additional sermon notes, we are in need of people to assist with technology for our livestream. Please contact Pastor Sylvia or Pastor Derek for more information.

8th and 9th graders are required to attend retreats as part of confirmation. Please hold the following dates for the retreats (we will send more information about these at a later date):

8th Grade Retreat: Tuesday, June 1 through Thursday, June 3

9th Grade Retreat: Saturday, April 17

Please also note that we will not be serving pizza on Wednesday nights. Some limited snacks will be available, but we ask that you make other arrangements for dinner.

There may be a need to adjust our confirmation schedule during the fall, depending on the public health situation in our county. We will be using the following metrics to determine whether to have in-person gatherings at church over the following months.

**Criteria for Returning to Indoor Worship and Activities**

FLC will proceed with a return to indoor, in-person worship and activities according to the executive committee-approved schedule if:

* Numbers of *active* coronavirus cases in Burleigh and Morton Counties are *no higher than 500 over a ten day average*. AND
* Bismarck Public Schools are offering at least 2 days a week of in-person instruction for students. AND
* As otherwise recommended by State and Local authorities (including Government, Health Department, Centers for Disease Control, and Local Task Force) for larger gatherings in one space.

\*This will be evaluated each week on Monday of each week for the Wednesday and Sunday following. The congregation will be notified by website, social media, email and text blast, and through the answering machine message.

**Criteria for Suspending Indoor Worship and Activities**

FLC will suspend in-person, indoor worship and activities under the following conditions:

* Numbers of *active* coronavirus cases in Burleigh and Morton Counties rise to above 500, based on a 10-day average. OR
* Bismarck Public Schools is no longer offering in-person instruction for students. OR
* One or more FLC program staff members (music leader or education director) tests positive for the coronavirus; in which case in-person activities would be suspended for 14 days from the date of positive test. OR
* One or more of FLC pastors tests positive for the coronavirus, in which case in-person activities would be suspended for 14 days from the date of positive test. OR
* We are notified that one or more members who have attended worship in the past 14 days has tested positive for the coronavirus, in which case in-person activities would be suspended for 14 days from the date of positive test. OR
* As otherwise recommended by State and Local authorities (including Government, Health Department, Centers for Disease Control, and Local Task Force) for larger gatherings in one space.

As things change over the course of the fall, we will communicate with you about the confirmation and worship schedule using the text blast system. **If you do not currently receive updates through this system, please contact Kenny as soon as possible.** This system is the best and easiest way for us to keep you informed about any changes to the schedule, weather updates, and other urgent information.

We know this is a confusing, stressful, and bizarre time for everyone, and we so appreciate your patience, flexibility, and commitment. We are praying for you as parents, and for your kids, as we navigate this year together. Please reach out to us if you or someone you know is in need of additional support, or if you have questions or concerns. Be safe and well, and we look forward to connecting with your student at confirmation soon.

In Christ,

Kenny Opsal, Education Director

Pastor Derek and Pastor Sylvia

FLC Confirmation Committee Co-Chairs Jonna Wutzke and Rachel Dykema