



Southern Illinois District—LCMS

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<http://sidlcms.org>

Rev. Timothy J. Scharr, President

Rev. Dr. Alvin Kollmann, President Emeritus

Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller, Jr., President Emeritus

Mr. Jeffrey Fick, Schools and General Executive

17 April 2020

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker, Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen and returning Lord!

The nearly 500 congregations of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod within Illinois pray for you and all magistrates regularly. We pray that the Lord may grant you good health, wisdom and discernment especially as you guide our state in this time of COVID-19. We further pray for all medical personnel, researchers and first responders who serve unselfishly.

Recognizing the danger we face, and the need to mitigate the spread of this virus, our churches, schools and people are following the guidelines issued by the State of Illinois. We have abided by these recommendations even during the most sacred week of the Christian Church Year. What troubled us from the very beginning was the exclusion of the Church and her ministry from the list of essential activities. We are more than a food pantry or transient assistance service. We prepare people to live now and for the life of the world to come.

Christians are among the best citizens in any jurisdiction. We are eager to do what is right and contribute our energies, resources and labor for the common good. Lutherans are unique in that we recognize what is called, the "Two Kingdoms." We believe that God has established two "kingdoms" here on earth. One is the "kingdom of the left" and the creation of earthly government and good order. This allows us to live in peace and safety. The second is the "kingdom of the right" and the establishment of the Church. This "kingdom" exists alongside the earthly government. Its concerns, however, are eternal and include such things as proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through Jesus Christ. Both kingdoms coexist and carry out their God-given responsibilities.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution recognizes the importance of religion and its free exercise within our nation. Indeed the first European settlers came to our shores seeking freedom to worship as their conscience dictated. Our German forefathers came nearly two centuries ago seeking the same freedom of religion. We cherish this freedom and are seeking to be able to worship as we believe is true and proper. **WE ARE ASKING YOU TO DECLARE RELIGIOUS SERVICES AS "ESSENTIAL" WITHIN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS.** Christians have a two thousand year history of caring for their neighbor and responding positively in times of plague and pesti-

lence. It was Christians who were responsible for the establishment of hospitals in Western Civilization. This connection remains to the present day as the names of many hospitals bear witness.

People are fearful, hurting and living in isolation. The Church brings comfort and strength in Jesus Christ through God's Word and Sacraments. As unemployment rises the stress of making ends meet becomes a heavy burden. Stimulus packages help but they are not a substitute for paychecks. People need assurance that the Lord will see them through this present time. Hope is one of the major benefits derived from public worship. It reinforces the sense of community and neighbor helping neighbor.


Our pastors are eager to serve their communities. They are willing to follow social distancing and other guidelines established by the State and Center for Disease Control. We are concerned about the elderly and those with underlying illnesses that may compound by the Corona virus should they contract it. We believe it is healthier to isolate the most vulnerable among us and allow the vast majority of healthy, lower risk individuals to live as normal of lives as possible.

We pray that you will favorably receive our petition and declare religious services as essential in the State of Illinois. Thank you for your consideration. Our prayers remain with you.

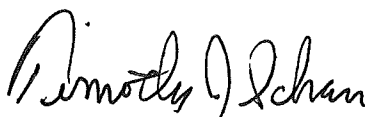
Sincerely,

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Rev. Dr. Allan Buss, President
Northern Illinois District - LCMS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Miller", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rev. Mark Miller, President
Central Illinois District - LCMS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Scharr", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rev. Timothy Scharr, President
Southern Illinois District - LCMS