



Northern Illinois District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

NID Statement on “Opening Up”

We are grateful for the bond, partnership, and confessional commitments we have in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and especially in the Northern Illinois District. We also understand that each congregation is self-governing as it gathers around the Lord’s gifts and carries out His Mission and Ministry. Congregations make decisions through discussions of pastor, lay leaders, church governing boards, and congregational voter’s meetings and congregational assemblies for the good of the Body of Christ in a specific community and congregation.

The Northern Illinois District stands ready to provide guidance, input, and theological reflection especially as we live together as the Church, the Body of Christ. We do not, and cannot, prescribe local congregational decisions unless they have doctrinal implications. Many local decisions are being made at this time, many of them in coordination with other congregations and the NID.

In light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, we encourage the congregations of the NID to keep in mind our Lord’s commands for His Church, the respect we have for civil authorities, and our love for our neighbor, especially as many are looking to the “reopening” of public worship. Special care and concern should be kept in mind as ministry occurs with vulnerable populations, including the elderly and infirm, especially regarding public worship and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We encourage congregational leaders to help people make wise decisions. Procedures and protocols should be in writing and followed with great care.

Issues of religious liberty protection is the domain of individual Christians as they speak out in a God-pleasing manner. There are also organizations that present a united voice, including the Alliance Defending Freedom, with which the LCMS and NID are associated. Congregations can also be part of ADF. Congregations and church leaders should be conscious of the doctrine of Two Kingdoms which is a hallmark of Lutheran understanding of church and state. The Kingdom of the left includes government (laws, order) and the Kingdom of the right is the Church and focuses primarily on the work of the Gospel.

In all things, we are bound to the Word of God, but we also do not “bind consciences” in matters related to different communities, demographics, or church customs. We do not want to make more laws and instructions beyond the Word of God and the explanation of our Lutheran Confessions.

“And He (God the Father) put all things under His feet (Christ) and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22,23)

May 15, 2020