

March 18, 2020

To: All LTS students

Dear students:

The peace of the Lord be with each of you.

Most likely over the past few weeks you have been assailed with myriad reports from sundry sources that have presented at times contradictory information. To that end, the President of LTS, Dr. Charisse L. Gillett sent a notice last week via Constant Contact with helpful links that provide information. I would strongly urge that you use the links for accurate information. You will be receiving further notifications in the coming days as we re-evaluate some of the events that we planned for the spring of 2020.

We are currently facing a world-wide viral pandemic with the introduction of COVID-19, otherwise referred to as coronavirus, into a susceptible human population. As a result, government leaders in many regions of the United States have been encouraging self-distancing, and in some cases self-isolation. In light of increasing restrictions upon public gatherings, in many instances, churches have deemed it safer to meet via virtual rooms rather than risk the well-being of their congregants. Given that the LTS curriculum is congregationally centered, this new reality has created some challenges. The President, Dean, and faculty of LTS are recommended the following to all faculty:

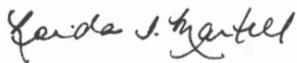
First, that when merited, faculty permit requests for extensions (incomplete grades) according to the policy stated in the Student Handbook, <https://www.lextheo.edu/5-0-academic-policies-and-procedures/#5.6>. We understand that many of you are currently facing challenges as you care for children, families, parents, and others; and many of you are helping your congregations transition to online formats or otherwise deal with the consequences of the pandemic facing so many of us. Faculty have the option to provide extensions for students who are at the moment overwhelmed with many of these responsibilities.

Second, if you are taking a course that has a “congregational assignment,” or if you are taking competency exams or completing capstone exercises—each which has a congregational component—then we *strongly urge you **not** to complete these congregational activities in a public gathering exceeding 25 people or where social distancing is not possible*. Rather, we are

strongly urging you to complete the congregational requirement in one of two ways: 1) record yourself preaching, teaching, instructing, etc. (whatever the activity calls you to do) in an empty room; or, 2) use Zoom or other live stream media to fulfill the activity, and record it. We will make Zoom accounts available to students completing capstone projects. For those completing competency exams, please contact me (lmartell@lextheo.edu) to see if any Zoom rooms are available for your use.

LTS has been an online school for more than a decade (since 2010). We understand the intricacies of what it means to be an online school and a community. We learned over the years how one is a community in spite of the distances. Let us model that now for the world. Our mission is “to prepare faithful leaders for the church of Jesus Christ and, thus, to strengthen the church’s participation in God’s mission for the world.” Let us model that mission by living out what we have learned in the classroom: to care for others in Christ’s love, to care for ourselves as creation of God, and to embody the gathering of the community under the grace of God’s Spirit. Be safe and be well.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loida I. Martell". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Rev. Dr. Loida I. Martell
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean
Professor of Constructive Theology

Cc: Dr. Charisse L. Gillett, President
Ms. Windy Kidd, Registrar