

On Tuesday, October 27, 2020, the administration of Martin Luther College (MLC), in consultation with Brown County Public Health (BCPH) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), weighed many different factors and inputs and made the decision to pivot from face-to-face instruction to distance learning. We make this shift in instruction methods out of an abundance of caution, not because the campus is unsafe, but in response to the growing number of individuals who require quarantine and isolation accommodations. Serving these students effectively is taking our quarantine and isolation spaces to maximum capacity. Because of this, and because of the uncertainty about future cases, we cannot maintain the appropriate level of safety for our campus and continue face-to-face instruction.

We make this decision on our own, while drawing upon the best resources and information available, and we continue to be guided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) COVID-19 prevention practices. We are also communicating and collaborating with local medical centers as we consider the health needs of our students, faculty, and staff—especially those at increased risk for the COVID-19 virus.

MLC President Rich Gurgel shared this with the campus family: “Our campus is a safe place. The masking and distancing protocols and the quarantine and isolation procedures continue to keep us safe under God’s blessing. We thank God for all the work of our dorm staff and also for the overwhelming cooperation on your part, dear brothers and sisters of the student body. God used all of that to make this work for 10 weeks. There is no one to blame. There are many reasons to say words of thanks under God’s grace for what we did enjoy.

Your faculty, the dorm staff, and the rest of our MLC staff will greatly miss seeing you in person. This campus exists to train you for ministry. None of us will argue that distance learning can replace everything we gain when we are able to live and meet together on this hill, yet we are thankful for the digital tools that are available to us and for the hard work of faculty and staff that will enable learning and growth toward ministry to continue. And we look forward to January 25 when, God willing, we will see one another again!

We love you in Christ. And more important, God loves you beyond measure. The promise spoken at your baptism remains our confidence: “The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more” (Psalm 121:8).

Since this shift is occurring sooner than expected, the MLC administration, faculty, and staff will work diligently to meet the varied physical, emotional, and academic needs of our students.

- Students are asked not to schedule impromptu group gatherings. Those who have adhered to this request during these 10 weeks have helped us stay on

campus. Please do not ignore all the hard work that has been accomplished, but say your goodbyes digitally for the sake of your friends and for the families you are going home to.

- Students who are currently in the process of isolation, quarantine, or awaiting test results will maintain their residence on campus.
- At this time, our student teachers who are completing their education requirements in our local schools will also retain housing services at MLC.
- Students who have flights home that cannot be changed may stay on campus until their scheduled departure.
- Those who have a family or household members at home who are at high risk of severe complications from COVID-19 should practice a 14-day quarantine of some kind before returning to that setting. (MDH recommendation)
- Those students who wish to stay on campus to quarantine for 14 days before returning home are granted this permission.
- All students who are remaining on campus will continue to practice all the necessary safety precautions commensurate with their current health status.
- All sports will be suspended.
- If students return home immediately, MDH and BCPH urge them to quarantine for 14 days to minimize any exposure to anyone in their household.

Below are additional links from MDH for reference.

- [Minnesota Department of Health Decision Tree](#)
- [What to do when waiting for results](#)
- [What to do if you have had close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)
- [When can I return to work if someone in my household is sick with COVID-19?](#)
- [Minnesota testing locations](#)
- [Guidance for those who are sick or caring for someone who is sick](#)
- [CDC Quarantine vs. Isolation](#)
- [Quarantine details](#)
- [Caring for someone who is sick](#)
- [What to do if I'm feeling ill](#)