

From: Bethel University <covid-19@bethel.edu>

Subject: COVID-19 Update: Spring Commencement Update

[PreferredName]—

Our decision to cancel face-to-face spring commencement ceremonies was a difficult one. In making that announcement, we had to weigh the likely impact of a global pandemic with all that goes into commencement—planning, travel for families, and the congregation of large numbers of people. At that time, we couldn't commit to face-to-face ceremonies this summer, but we continued to explore additional options.

We've also heard from many of you. Your messages reminded us that in the midst of this season, we are in this together and can work together to come up with the best solutions possible. Thanks to the hard work of our Conference and Event Services and Academic Affairs teams, we are able to modify our commencement plans:

1. **Spring commencement ceremonies and activities will be held face-to-face in August.** Ceremonies and related events will be held in St. Paul on August 14-16. A date for Bethel Seminary San Diego commencement in August is still being finalized.
2. **Live virtual commencement celebrations will take place on May 23-24.** These mark the conclusion of your degree program and provide an opportunity for our community and friends to celebrate the accomplishments of graduating students as the semester ends. Each celebration will include the reading of the names of each graduate. I hope you, your families, and your friends will join us online for these special events.

More information on these events will be available on the [commencement website](#) by Friday, April 17. Students scheduled to graduate will receive further information next week as well.

Even as we move forward with these plans, it's important to note that we cannot predict the trajectory of the pandemic or evolving guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). If it becomes clear that holding face-to-face commencement ceremonies in August would compromise the safety and wellbeing of our community, we will postpone those ceremonies until December 18-19. We will make a final decision about whether it is safe to hold face-to-face commencement ceremonies by July 6.

As we celebrate the sacrifice and victory of Jesus this weekend, I hope that you have a chance to pause in the midst of an exceptionally disruptive time and reflect on one important constant—the love God has for each of us. May you be filled with the hope and encouragement that comes from God.

If you have questions regarding this decision, please contact the emergency management team at covid-19@bethel.edu.

Serving together,

-Jay

Jay Barnes
President

Bethel University
3900 Bethel Drive
St. Paul, MN 55112