



Rev. David J. Panning, Pastor
(843) 903-1509

Lutheran Church

2541 Forestbrook Road
Myrtle Beach, SC 29588
(843) 236-1344

March 12, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Holy Lamb,

The coronavirus has been in the news and is affecting each of us differently. I do not intend to escalate the anxiety with this letter. Rather, I want to give you some encouragement, assurances, and opportunities as we navigate this unfamiliar territory, together. I have many points to cover so, in order to keep this letter as short as possible, I will try to be brief with each subject. If, after reading this, you would like more information, please don't hesitate to call or email me.

I will begin with a familiar verse, "Rejoice always, *pray without ceasing*, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18, *italics mine*) In these uncertain times our first activity is to turn to God in prayer. In Him we have the assurance of comfort and peace in this life, no matter the circumstances, as well as the assurance of eternal life in heaven. The phrase "this is the will of God," is not saying that whatever you are enduring is at God's direction. Rather, "the will of God" is that you, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances." As we move through these uncharted waters, may God's peace and presence draw you to Him.

Moving on to some observations and ministry adjustments.

First, our attendance has been slightly lower the last 2 weeks. I am not surprised; nor do I consider it inappropriate to stay home if you are uncomfortable in the crowd setting. However, I want you to be aware of the changes to our procedures that may impact your decision or comfort level going forward.

1. We are not shaking hands. I still greet everyone on the sidewalk with a warm welcome and a nod. During the sharing of the peace, we greet each other with a sincere, "The peace of the Lord be with you," as we look each other in the eye.
2. Our communion preparation and distribution includes enhanced preventative measures. Our Altar Guild washes their hands before preparing the elements in the Sacristy. Our elders wash their hands before coming forward for communion. They also use the hand sanitizer in the back of the Altar before beginning distribution. I wash my hands before worship and use the hand sanitizer before uncovering the elements and, again, before beginning distribution to the elders and ushers.
3. In addition, we now use an alcohol-saturated purificator (the napkin-like cloth) to wipe the chalice after each use, as well as after each table. The combination of a 90% alcohol wipe with the natural germ-killing nature of silver and gold metals is very effective at sanitizing the chalice. The chalice is silver outside and gold inside. Silver and gold have been proven to be excellent germ fighting tools and are even used medically for this purpose.

If these assurances make you more comfortable worshipping with us, I look forward to seeing you, soon.

(continued on back)

Second, if you choose to remain at home until the threat has passed, I have other good news for you.

1. We are now recording our Sunday and Wednesday sermons and posting them to the Media tab our website, <https://www.holylambmyrtlebeach.org/media/>. Of course, this recording practice will continue as a permanent part of our ministry.
2. As always, I am available to visit you in your home to share the Good News of God's forgiveness and bring it to you in the form of The Lord's Supper. I will continue this practice unless I am prohibited by law from visiting or, of course, if I become sick. Many years ago, when I became a chaplain at the hospital, I was instructed in basic sanitary practices associated with visiting the sick. (Unless you are a healthcare professional, you might not know that there is a proper way to remove gloves after visiting someone who is sick.) Those instructions, along with the proper equipment will keep both of us safe. I have plenty of brand new masks from Holy Lamb's work on disaster response. (We have had these in stock for a year. I did not deplete the supply we now need.) These are far superior even to the masks that are routinely used in the healthcare industry. They are a rubber and plastic mask frame that fits to the face with adjustable, elastic straps. They have replaceable N-95 filters of the same caliber as the government is recommending. The frame provides a better seal than paper masks. I may look like someone from a sci-fi movie, but the promises of God are sure, regardless of the appearance of the one proclaiming them.

If you are staying home and desire a visit, please don't hesitate to call.

Some, even some pastors, have expressed the thought, "Is all this preparation and prevention activity leading us to rely on ourselves and our technology rather than God?" I believe we should consider all the tools at our disposal as gifts of God, given to us for the preservation and protection of life, just as every medical drug, procedure, and device is also used for those purposes. We routinely thank God for His healing accomplished by medical personnel and means. These are no different.

Speaking of God's gifts, I'd also like to address the opportunity presented by our new(er) offering envelopes. These are already addressed to Holy Lamb and need only your offering and a stamp. They can be left in your mailbox for the mail carrier to collect – all without leaving your property. Of course, I would be happy to receive your offering when I visit you, also.

I will close as I began – with a word from Scripture, this one shared by Rev. Mark Schroeder of our Southeastern District office: "...perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment ..." (1 John 4:18) In the midst of this outbreak we need not fear. Be cautious and wise – yes, but not fearful. Christ has endured all the punishment of God, which enables him to love us unconditionally. In that love we have the sure and certain hope of his presence in our lives each day, as well the sure and certain hope of our presence in heaven, eternally.

In His service,

Pastor Panning

panningdj@gmail.com

Cell 843-424-5300