

Holy Lamb Lutheran Church

2541 Forestbrook Road
Myrtle Beach, SC 29588

May 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

To open or not to open. That is the question.

A very strong case can be made for either decision. And the case can be made on both sides using both facts and emotions. This is a difficult time for everyone, especially those charged with making decisions regarding returning to normal activities.

To recap decisions made to this point:

March 16th - A joint Council/Elders meeting, held at church, decided to suspend all activities at Holy Lamb (worship, Bible study, committees, and outside organizations) until the end of March. We agreed to meet on March 30 to reevaluate.

March 30th - The same Council/Elders group met via Zoom to address the issues. The group decided to continue the suspension through the month of April. They also developed more specifics regarding use of the building: essential personnel and uses included: those necessary for producing Sunday morning worship; Pastor and Marsha for necessary office duties including bulletin and worship prep; Bill and Doug for necessary financial duties; Sally for necessary, ongoing preschool activities to keep our students and parents active and involved; this included necessary time in the office, as well as meeting parents on the driveway to distribute materials for use at home. Members would be able to come in to pick up Portals of Prayer and make other quick stops for similar purposes. Such stops should not include lengthy conversations.

They agreed to meet at the end of the month to reevaluate.

Our Congregation President, Ron Hajduk, has asked me to arrange a Zoom meeting for the Council/Elder on Monday April 27. I will send an email/USPS notice to all participants with the connection information.

However, I want to include some information in this newsletter so that the entire congregation is aware of the various factors and aspects of this conversation as our officers make decisions.

As I said at the beginning, there are valid points, factual and emotional, to support both side of the open/close question. And I will tell you up front, **I am not endorsing either decision at this point and don't expect to have a recommendation at the meeting.** This decision is too critical for any one person to 'dictate' an outcome. And many have come to the conclusion that whatever Pastor suggests is accepted without debate. This decision needs to be, and will be, the result of careful, considered discussion by the Council and Elder members present on the Zoom meeting.

I will share my thoughts, Pro and Con, here for the consideration of the whole congregation. I had intended to distinguish between Facts and Emotions in making the two cases. However, our emotions are driven by facts and our emotions result in actions – which are behavioral facts. So I begin each section with Objective Facts, and then move to Interpretations and Emotions. That is not to say that the second section is devoid of objective reasoning, only that it *includes* subjective thoughts and emotions.

Contents:

From the Pastor's Desk	1,2,3
Ladies Society Luncheon	3
Being in the Word Daily	4
Bible Study Opportunities	4
Financial Profile	4
Worship Opportunities	5
Communication	5
B'days & Anniversaries	6
Prayer Requests	6
Armed Forces	
Recognition Month.....	6
Worship Schedule	7

(continued on page 2)

In favor of reopening:

Objective Facts

According to WPDE's reporting, and their accompanying chart, South Carolina's peak occurred around April 9th. One of President Trump's criteria for entering Phase 1 is two weeks of a downward trend in new cases. If this trend continues, South Carolina fits within that parameter.

A paragraph from reporter Nick Papantonis is worth considering:

“Remember, flattening the curve was never about preventing people from getting sick. The COVID-19 virus is going to do the one thing it was designed to do: spread. Instead, flattening the curve – and every social distancing measure put in place to help it – was about making sure people didn't get infected all at once.”

Closing businesses was never going to prevent the spread of Covid 19. It was only going to slow it to a level that our healthcare facilities could handle. We will always have contagious viruses, including the flu, that will not be eliminated as long as there is *any* interpersonal contact.

We have achieved the slowed rate desired by the closing of businesses and it's time to reopen.

Those who have conditions that put them at high risk have the prerogative of staying home. (This is a factual statement even though it has emotional overtones.)

Interpretations and Emotions

We have been without the personal fellowship of our fellow Christians and without a celebration of the Lord's Supper for 6 Sundays (as of Monday's meeting). We are the church and we are called to gather for worship and Sacrament. The church is strengthened when it gathers for worship and fellowship. Continued separation will cause damage to our congregation.

In favor of remaining closed:

Objective Facts

The moving 8-day indicator on the chart reflects the entire state's status. Every county is unique. This can be seen in the other charts on WPDE's website. Unfortunately, they do not offer the 8-day chart for a county-by-county perspective as they do with all the other charts. (I have emailed the reporter asking him to make that available.) If the state has peaked, but Horry County's peak is yet to come, we are not within President Trump's formula for Phase 1. In that case, reopening at this time would be exactly the wrong decision to make.

The death rate in Horry County has plateaued, but it has plateaued before, according to WPDE's charts, and then continued to rise. There has been no downward trend in deaths in Horry County.

Holy Lamb has a higher percentage of high-risk people than the at-large population of Horry County or the state. According to the CDC, high-risk people include (but is not limited to) those who: are over age 65, have lung issues, have serious heart conditions, are severely obese, or have diabetes. We have a number of members who fall into one or more these groups.

Many of our members, regardless of other health issues, will attend regardless of their own health issues because they believe, “If the church is worshiping, I should be there.” (This is a factual statement, even though the individual decision is an emotional one.)

(continued on page 3)

Interpretations and Emotions

We are called to care for each other and it is not a caring act to encourage people to gather in a manner that puts them and others at risk. When our fellowship is experienced in a personal phone call, it is far more meaningful than a simple handshake and, “How are you?” or a nod across the room. If our fellowship has been diminished during this time, it is our own doing.

We can be renewed and strengthened in our faith through online worship (means have been provided for those without internet access), personal Bible study, and group Bible study (which is arguably more accessible now). While it may not be as familiar, in times such as these, given the alternative, it is fully sufficient.

Summary

As you can see, this is not an easy decision. There are even two simple statements that can be used to sum up the situation, each supporting only one of the options:

We should not default to the status quo, simply because it’s easier than making a tough decision.

If there is no overwhelming, unopposed reason to change from the status quo, we should not make a decision to change.

I don’t believe there is only one correct decision; if there is, we probably won’t know what that right one was for some time, if ever. We can only do what we believe best serves God and accomplishes His will.

SED President John Denninger summed up this dilemma well when he said, paraphrasing, everybody is seeking to do God’s will and serve as best they are able. We ought not engage in condemning others because we disagree with their actions or decisions. While President Denninger was addressing the differences in the decisions various congregations were making, it applies equally well to the decisions and votes that we will make.

I pray that we will all engage in fervent prayer for our church, state, and nation as every entity struggles with these difficult decisions.

In His service,

Pastor Panning

Ladies Society Luncheon

If restaurants in Murrells Inlet are open in May, the Ladies Society will be holding it's May 5th Luncheon at *Dead Dog Saloon* at 11:30 a.m.

Merilynn Sell is our RSVP individual and she has asked that all of us re-confirm our reservation with her. All ladies of the church are invited to attend.

Thank you!

Pat Marquardt



FINANCIAL PROFILE—GIVING

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>
4/5	3,437	4,664
4/12	3,437	3,180
4/19	3,437	4,170
April	10,311	12,014
YTD	54,992	53,342

Being in the Word daily

Now more than ever, a daily infusion of God's Word will help us deal with the turmoil going on around us.

Our synod's own publisher, Concordia Publishing House (CPH), offers several options worth considering:

- **A Treasury of Daily Prayer** - This volume has daily readings from the Bible as well as the Lutheran Confessions. It includes a format for daily devotions and much more. Kathy and I have used this for periods of time and have found it very rewarding. Its list price is \$50.00, but CPH is offering it for \$34.99. This is a savings of 31% on a wonderful resource for your home.
- **Day by Day – 365 Devotional readings from Martin Luther** - These are the devotions we use at the beginning of Council and Elder meetings. At one paragraph each, they offer a quick devotional start to a day. Paperback, \$15.99
- **Readings from the Psalms with Luther** - This volume includes all 150 of the Psalms, as well as a brief commentary by Luther on each one – again, a great, quick start to your day. Hardcover, \$17.99.
- Many more titles are available at cph.org, currently including some free downloadable resources for adults and children.



I encourage you to go online and browse through their assortment to find one that suits you. The peace brought to us in daily Scripture reading is, as I say at the end of every sermon, “the peace which surpasses all human understanding.”

Bible Studies

We have three Bible studies going at this time:

Tuesday mornings, 9:00 AM – a study of the book of *Hebrews*. The writer of *Hebrews* demonstrates that Jesus is the Promised Messiah that Israel has been waiting for.

Wednesday evenings, 6:30 PM – a study of the book. *Grace, Faith, Scripture – Portrait of a Lutheran*. This very short book explains the foundation Lutheran ‘solas’ (Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone) in easy to understand language.

Thursday evenings, 6:30 PM – the **Ladies Bible Study** is looking at the three epistles written by the Apostle John, beginning, Thursday, April 30th.

Promises of God: God's Word contains many amazing promises, but it can be hard to know how they apply to our lives—or even if all of them do. The good news is that God's promises are true and extended to us in Christ, even when we don't fully understand them. This 3 week study explores many beloved promises found in Scripture.

We have seen several new participants in these studies and invite you to join us for any of them.

Our Zoom login remains the same. If you no longer have access to it, please email Pastor, or anybody who you know attends and they will share it with. For security reasons, please do not share this login on social media.



Continuing Worship Opportunities

No matter the restrictions placed on travel, we still have an opportunity to worship weekly. More than that, we have the opportunity to go back and review comments that we may have missed in the sermon, and want to hear again.

We have four worship options:



- **Live-streaming on Facebook** I continue to conduct worship services in our Sanctuary at 9:00AM on Sundays. These can be seen live on our Facebook page: Holy Lamb Lutheran LCMS.
- **Watch the recorded version** on Facebook any time after that.

Access the recording on our website shortly after the service completes. Tom Marquardt has built a new website for us. At the top of the page you will find a **Media** tab. Clicking that will open a page with all of our previously recorded services, including several of our Midweek Lenten services. The website is: holylambmyrtlebeach.org.

- **For those who do not have access to the internet**, we have a limited number of Galaxy tablets. These are miniature (approx. 6" x 9") handheld devices. I have modified them so that they are quite simple to use: press one button to 'wake up' the device; swipe your finger across the screen; and touch the worship service you would like to watch.

Think of these as a modern day equivalent to someone dropping off a cassette recording of the service. No passwords, no computer training. So far I have 9 services on each tablet. I'm not sure how many it will hold before I need to erase the older ones to make room for the new ones. Each week I install the newest service and exchange an updated tablet for the one I gave you the previous week.

Communication

I have been thrilled to hear of the communication that is happening among our members. If you have not been a part of this, and are feeling left out, pick up the phone and join the conversation.

Let's keep the lines of communication open, active, and alive with joy and peace.





May Blessings on your Birthday!

- 3rd Gene McCarthy
- 7th Kyla Thomas
- 17th Doc Rehm
- 18th Ashlee Reimer
- 19th Madison Gall
- 19th Judy Thropp
- 21st Pat Allison
- 23rd Steven Rehm
- 24th Linda Riley
- 24th Merilynn Sell
- 24th Karen Teixeira
- 25th Ron Ziembo
- 27th Sharon Ewing



Happy Anniversary!

- 8th Jay & Rebecca Indla
- 17th Marty & Terrie Reynolds
- 19th Joe & Jen Hirsh
- 28th John & Karen Bombria
- 30th Bob & Myrle Rumsey

For Healing

Patricia, sister of Dorothy Gardner
Ann, daughter of Carol Stocum
Julia, great-granddaughter of Al Stout
Bill, brother-in-law of Sue Alderson
Vivie, relative of John & Karen Bombria
Michael, brother-in-law of Marsha Dunn
Bea, Ron Hajduk's mother

Jackie Anctil	Pat Cassar
Pam Gall	Jerry Palmer
Steven Rehm	Monica Steele
Carol Stocum	Brenda Tainter
John Orr	

Non-Military Personnel During Coronavirus Pandemic

First Responders, Healthcare Workers, and all who are working to keep us safe.

Thanksgiving

John & Sandy Orr who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in April.



May is Armed Forces Recognition Month

We honor and pay gratitude to those who serve our great nation:

ARMY STRONG: Staff Sergeant, Jay Thaxter
PFC, Mark Ruelle
Master Sergeant, Heath Stephenson

AIR FORCE—AIM HIGH: Sergeant, Martin Bowyer
Staff Sergeant, Adam Dye

NAVY—FORGED BY SEA: 3rd Class Petty Officer, Kevin Hickey
Seamen, Haley Dickinson
Commander, Andy Steele

MARINES—SEMPER FIDELIS: Captain, Mark Bertolone
Lieutenant Colonel, Mark Schaefer

Holy Lamb Lutheran Church

2541 Forestbrook Road
Myrtle Beach, SC 29588

Rev. David J. Panning, Pastor

Church
843-236-1344

Preschool
843-236-9645

Worship Schedule

Sundays—9:00 am

Sunday School & Bible Study

Tuesday Morning Bible Study 9:00 am
Hebrews

Wednesday Evening Bible Study 6:30 pm
Grace, Faith, Scripture ~ Portrait of a Lutheran

Thursday Evening 6:30 pm
Women's Bible Study ~ *1st, 2nd and 3rd John*