

# *Pause with Pastor*

October 1, 2020

## **Encouragement from the Psalms**

Bret Rhoades

*Cast your cares (**burdens**) upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. He will never let the righteous to fall.*

(Psalm 25:22)

(The word ‘burdens’ is in bold to indicate it as being in various translations, including King James. I prefer that word, probably because Mendelssohn wrote an oratorio partially based on that line of scripture).

As a child my parents repeatedly told me to do some things, and to not do others. They found it important to repeat and repeat until the time I no longer needed the reminder. Don’t put your finger in the electrical outlet (my hand was slapped many times). Brush your teeth before bedtime. Wash your hands before meals. I needed reminders for many years on the many things my parents thought important. And as an adult when I play golf, I have to constantly remind myself to keep my head down when hitting the ball ... and if I don’t remember, one of my playing companions will remind me of this very important thing.

In the Holy Lamb October newsletter Pastor Panning begins his note to us saying ‘The apostle Peter encourages us to cast our cares upon Jesus, because he cares for us.’

David in Psalm 55 tells us to cast our cares upon the Lord and he will sustain us. David also tells us in Psalm 68:19 *Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior who daily bears our burdens.*

So, this message of casting our cares, our burdens upon the Lord is one that is repeated throughout the Bible, in song, and by Pastor Panning. I wonder why? Could it be that it is important, that we need a constant reminder?

Our Lord and Savior and friend does care for us, so much so that he sent his only begotten son to die in our stead for our sins, so that we might live with him forever.

I would encourage you this week to remember the first portion of Psalm 55:22. I would also encourage you to read the words to the hymn “What A Friend We Have In Jesus”, either on line or hymn 770 in our hymnal.

Our heavenly Father, we thank you that we do have a friend in Jesus, one that not only shares our cares and burdens, but is willing to carry the entire load. We are weak, but you are strong. Thank you for your constant reminders, for your Holy Word, for a congregation that cares for one another. Amen

# The ‘New Normal’

I really don’t care for the way that phrase is used. (Read to the end to find a much better application.). Even when things were ‘normal’ every single person I know was experiencing something abnormal in their life. The only ‘normal’ that ever existed was at the end of six days of creation when God “saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:37). That was normal. Ever since the fall, *abnormality* has been the rule. Sin has destroyed God’s very good normal, and the best we can do is learn to roll with the constant and increasing abnormalities and try to develop a consistency, a normalcy, in the face of all this abnormality (sin and its effects).

Why do we seek a ‘normal’? Because human beings find security and comfort in constancy. At a restaurant (remember those?) we usually order meals we know and like; we will watch television shows we already know will entertain us; we enjoy liturgical worship because of the familiarity.

This is why Christians find comfort in their Savior, Jesus. God’s promise to forgive your sins because of the death of the Messiah has been constant ever since the first ‘abnormality’ destroyed God’s design for normal. Your forgiveness is assured in Scripture and was proven in Christ’s resurrection.

But that still leaves us trying to normalize the abnormal.

As we move into colder months, and as the COVID19 numbers continue to improve (hopefully), the Elders are considering how and when to best and safely resume worship inside the Sanctuary. To that end, many variables need to be addressed – some need a determination by the Elders, some will be determined by the weather, and some will be determined by you.

These variables are:

- A date to return indoors;
- A maximum number in the Sanctuary/number of services;
- Provisions for best air quality;
- Other provisions;

With this number of variables, some decisions have to be made which will factor into other decisions. That is to say, we cannot simply ask, “Are you willing to worship inside?” because your natural response will be, “How many will be there, and what is the spacing?” So the Elders have undertaken to make some decisions which you can use to determine your comfort level and your response to the question, “Are you ready to enter the Sanctuary for worship?” I will address the bullet points one by one, although some of them even have several factors within them.

## A DATE TO RETURN INDOORS

We have been blessed with mild temperature and dry conditions. While it was a little warm in August, we did not have to worship in 100-degree heat and we never had to cancel drive-through distribution or on-the-lawn worship due to rain. Both of these options were well-received: drive-through communicants regularly exceeded 60 and on-the-lawn worship often exceeded 50. Because of the success of these practices, we will continue them through the month of October.

Recognizing that temps will cool down we are looking at possible worshipping inside the Sanctuary on November 1. ***Please note: this date is not set in stone at this time.*** If the forecast is for nice weather, we will worship on the lawn. Indeed, if the weather holds, we may continue our present practice beyond November 1. However, for the purposes of this letter and your responses to the questions, consider an indoor worship date of November 1.

## PROVISIONS FOR BEST AIR QUALITY

Our Sanctuary is much smaller than a typical Sanctuary. In order to accommodate as many people as possible, we need to do as much as possible to maintain a high air quality. We will address this issue on 2 fronts.

First, at our Leadership Team meeting on Monday, the Elders will propose installing 3 iWave air purification devices, one in each of our HVAC systems. This will cost just under \$3000. In short, the system cleans the air as it passes through the air handler when the fan is running, whether it is heating, cooling, or neither (fan ‘always on’ setting). Even if we are not heating or cooling at any given moment on a Sunday morning, we will keep the fan running to help clean the air. If you are interested, you can check their website, [iWaveair.com](http://iWaveair.com), for more information.

Second, during worship, we will leave the front entry doors in the Narthex open, as well as the doors on either side of the Altar at the front of the Sanctuary. This will promote an air exchange, bringing fresh, outdoor air inside. (Larger commercial buildings, including large churches, have a component of outside air introduced into the duct system for this reason.)

These 2 steps will allow us a higher number of worshippers in the Sanctuary.

## A MAXIMUM NUMBER IN THE SANCTUARY/NUMBER OF SERVICES

This calculation incorporates several factors: seating spacing, family unit size, air flow and air quality options (addressed above), even ceiling height. The LCMS churches in our area that are worshipping inside their Sanctuaries are allowing 18 – 27% of their previous capacity in a worship service. These Sanctuaries all have much higher ceilings (more dilution of any contaminants) and larger chancel areas (floor space without seating). This range would allow 20 – 32 in attendance (the higher number if additional steps were taken to increase ‘air exchange’ or other air quality options due to our more compact floor plan).

Let’s address the seating arrangements. Given our tight quarters, it is more practical to count ‘family seating units’ rather than actual number of individuals. We can fit 15 family units in the Sanctuary with 9’ spacing (we used 10’ on the front lawn). But that is not the only factor. The size of the family is a factor. We could not safely accommodate 15 family units of 3 each (45 total) because of the air quality issue. Likewise, we could not safely accommodate 30 single-person family units because they would be too closely spaced.

We will have a registration process allowing people to sign-up to attend worship on a first come, first served basis. The registration will have a maximum number of 30 attendees. After that, registration for that service will be closed.

That brings up the question of how many services are needed. Of course, we won’t know until people begin registering. So we have a link on our church’s website to a survey. Go to [holylambmyrtlebeach.org](http://holylambmyrtlebeach.org), click on **ABOUT US**, click on **HL MEMBERS** and fill out the form. Then click **SUBMIT**. *This is not a registration for a Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> worship service.* This is an inquiry to help us determine how many services to plan for. Later, we will have a specific sign-up with a specific date and service times. If you are not able to access the website, please call the church office and tell us your name and how many would be worshipping.

## **OTHER PROVISIONS**

### **Arrival**

Please enter and take your seat immediately. If you would like to engage in conversation, please do that outside, at a safe distance from each other and allowing for easy access to the door for those entering the building.

Only one family unit, people that share the same house, may sit in any group of chairs. You may not sit with a friend, even if the seat next to them is empty. Do not relocate any chairs. They are set at safe distances.

### **Departure**

Please exit beginning with the rear of the Sanctuary. This will eliminate unnecessary crossing of paths.

### **Masks**

Masks are required of all worshipers at all times. I will remove my mask only when standing at the Altar conducting worship, preaching, and praying. I will wear it while singing hymns and distributing communion.

### **Communion**

We will distribute communion to worshipers at their places. You may stand to receive the Sacrament out of respect for Christ's body and blood. An Elder will distribute the wafer, I will follow immediately with the tray of wine/grape juice in individual cups. An usher will follow with the basket for the empty cups. At the conclusion of the distribution, I will pronounce the dismissal to the entire congregation. These are the procedures we used at our last outdoor worship and it worked well.

## **CONCLUSION**

As you can see, we have many challenges to address in reopening the Sanctuary. We should not automatically conclude that this is the new normal. We will continue to address unforeseen circumstances as they develop and may even need to make some on-the-spot modifications. This is all new to all of us. Please be patient as we work through the challenges.

As we re-engage in indoor worship, I pray that you will remember that, in spite of the abnormalities, our worship service is, in fact, a celebration of the true New Normal to come. In that New Normal, the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth promised in Revelation, we will be celebrating our own new life and our own new creation. We will be worshiping without restriction, without masks, and without fear. That New Normal will be, as was the first Normal, "very good." (Gen. 1:37). May that understanding of our worship conquer any abnormalities, just as Christ has conquered sin on our behalf.

I look forward to worshiping with you on the lawn Sunday, as we celebrate our anticipation of the New Normal to come.

In Christ,

Pastor Panning