



When I am afraid, I put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4 ESV)

March 12, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ at Mt. Hope Lutheran Church,

The purpose of this letter is to update you on the recent discussions regarding our worship services that have been had among the Elders, as well as inform you about our upcoming Holy Week plans. I will try to be as succinct as possible, which is usually very difficult for me, so no promises!

We continue to be encouraged by the number of people who have been vaccinated (including many of our own members), the relatively low case numbers locally and state-wide, and the even lower local hospitalization numbers. We have also seen an increase in those attending worship regularly and that is an answer to prayers. We pray all of those things continue.

In talking with membership and leadership of our church, we feel the time is right to continue our planning for a return to normalcy when it comes to our life in the church, which has been affected for a full year now. We have purposely not been “sprinting” back, however, because we want to do this safely and effectively for everyone involved.

Here are changes we've made, or are planning to make in the near future:

- Holy Week schedule of worship looks like this:
 - Palm Sunday, March 28th – 11 a.m. (Communion)
 - Maundy Thursday, April 1st – 5 p.m. (Communion)
 - Good Friday, April 2nd – 5 p.m.
 - Easter Sunday, April 4th – 11 a.m. (Communion)
- The Elders are still working toward getting our recordings of live services up and posted on YouTube. Those will be distributed to the congregation each week by email. We also have just the audio recording of the sermons available through a link on our website www.mthopelcmsgrayling.org. For those who are not comfortable or able to return to in-person services yet, we encourage you to take advantage of one of these resources.
- We've begun to add in more hymns to our worship service. This will continue and be up to three hymns per service by Holy Week (Palm Sunday is March 28th), plus a sung liturgy part or two.
- Our liturgy will continue to return to a more normal order. I intend to offer Children's Talks in the Sunday service when there are children in the pews.
- We are going to remove some of the ropes separating pews to offer more capacity starting Sunday, March 14th, but still encourage everyone to use the whole sanctuary to spread out

and keep space between those in the same pew. There will still be ropes separating pews on the organ/piano side of the church for those who would still like the additional space.

Things we are still evaluating for the future:

- The distribution method for Holy Communion is still being discussed by the Elders. We will keep it “as is” for now. The Elders will continue to evaluate this topic.
- We will ask that everyone continues to wear a mask or face covering while attending service and while in the various parts of the church building.
- We would like to begin a simplified coffee hour in the fellowship hall after service in the near future, perhaps beginning next month. This, too, is being discussed.

We hope that these changes will serve you and the whole body of Christ well, as we regain much of what we have been missing, but more importantly, as we appreciate all that God continues to graciously bless us with week in and week out. As always, with any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or an Elder.

(It still ended up being a lengthy letter!)

Continued Lenten Season Blessings,

Pastor Joe Polzin
and the Board of Elders