



Wittenberg Lutheran Church

233 N. LEE STREET • P.O. BOX 3447 • BATESBURG-LEESVILLE, SC 29070 • (803) 532-4636

Rev. Emily Edenfield, Pastor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” In Isaiah 41:10, God speaks words of love and strength to us. God’s people face good and hard times knowing that we are never alone. We may be cautious, we may seek to be wise, but we do not have to fear, because God is with us wherever we are.

On May 12, Wittenberg’s Church Council had a long conversation about how to continue worshipping together during the Covid-19 pandemic. We know that this season is not over yet, but the council feels that it is time for us to resume in-person worship on May 31, if the trends continue in a positive direction. We will continue to be a community that worships online, with the option for people to come in person if they so choose.

It is important to be clear with you. In person worship carries risk. We are hoping and praying that the infection will pass us by, but it is possible that someone who is infected with Covid-19 will worship at Wittenberg before they are aware that they are sick. We will do everything we can to maintain appropriate social distancing and cleaning procedures, but we know that there is no perfect system.

If we find out that there has been an infectious person at Wittenberg, we will notify everyone who was worshipping in-person that morning so that they can self-quarantine and/or seek treatment. We will also stop in-person worship at that time for two weeks and have the church properly cleaned.

We will also have procedures in place for in-person worship. These will include

- Worshippers will be required to wear masks covering their noses and mouths. Please bring your own mask. A limited number of masks will be available in the narthex if needed.
- Seating will be separated by six feet. This means that we will have two pews empty in front of and behind occupied pews. Households will be seated at one end of a pew or the other, so that six feet of distance can be maintained in between family groups. Ushers will assist worshippers in going to the next available pew, and in leaving at the end of the service so that people are not crowded together at any time. Many of us will have to adjust to the view from another pew; this will be part of the learning experience of this time.
- The only doors to enter worship will be the double red doors facing Lee Street. This will keep ushers able to account for how many people we have and who has been present. If we need overflow seating in the Fellowship Hall, ushers will guide worshippers to that area at that time.
- Ushers or greeters will also be taking attendance at worship so that we know who was present, in case of infection.
- Worshippers are encouraged to take bulletins home with them or recycle them as they leave.
- Singing will not be part of our worship at this time. Singing seems to be one of the most effective ways to spread Covid-19, and it is simply unsafe for us to have a choir, hymns, or chanting. We may have some music on the organ or piano, but we do not anticipate singing for quite some time.

- For easier cleaning, we have removed everything that is touchable from the pews. That means that there are no hymnals, nothing in the pew racks, and no busy bags for children. We have also removed the cushions from the pews. If you would like to bring your own cushion, you may do so. The offering will be collected at the entrance to the sanctuary so that we do not pass the plates hand-to-hand.
- We will also postpone holy communion, the passing of the peace, worship processions and all non-worship activities except for the Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen until a later date. There will be ushers and greeters, but no OSJ, choir, lectors, or worship assistants.
- There will be no nursery and no children's church at this time. We encourage parents to keep children out of the nursery, as we are not able to sanitize all the toys and furniture.
- We will have only the 11:00 service. While having two services would help spread out the numbers, it seemed safest from a cleaning perspective to have just one set of people in the sanctuary each week. Council has spent a considerable amount of time discussing cleaning supplies that will disinfect without damaging our wooden and brass furnishings, and this seems for now to be our best option. Overflow seating will be available in the Fellowship Hall at the guidance of the ushers.

This is going to need to be a team effort. For the safety of our community, we all need to be practicing good hygiene and distancing. If you are feeling sick or live with someone who feels sick, please stay home. If you are not comfortable with being together in worship yet, or if you aren't comfortable abiding by the above practices, please stay home. Our online worship still gathers us in God's name.

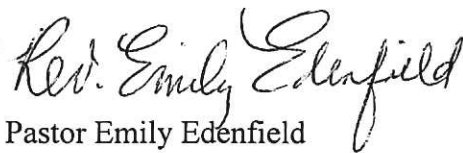
We are all still learning. When we left our sanctuary in March, we did not know that it would be so long before we could gather again. We thought that we would come back with a celebration full of music and hugs. That isn't how things are happening. We are coming back slowly and cautiously instead.


The truth is that for a long time we have worshiped in multiple places. Our homebound members and those who are sick or traveling have worshiped from their own locations alongside our in-person worshippers every Sunday for years. This is what God's word does. We are brought together in the Spirit even when our bodies cannot be. We are blessed to be able to connect in the ways that we do, even as we're apart no matter what the reason or season.

If you are planning to worship in person in the coming weeks, please let us know. You can respond to a survey coming out on social media or email or call Becky in the church office. That will help us plan for everyone's safety and comfort. If you are willing to be an usher or greeter, please include that information. We will provide training on video before you come to serve.

Thank you all for your prayers, for your love for one another, for the courage to do what is right for yourself and your families. Please continue to walk in love as Christ loved us. We will see you when the time is right, be that sooner or later.

Peace,


Pastor Emily Edenfield


Brian Shealy, Council President