



Ascension Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Christina Auch, Pastor

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Grace and peace to you, siblings in Christ.

This week the number of cases of COVID-19 rose in North Carolina and the United States, and the World Health organization designated COVID-19 as a pandemic. I am in communication with the local health department as well as other religious and community leaders and ask for your continued prayers as we make decisions about how to best care for our congregation and community, especially those who are physically or digitally isolated.

While no cases have yet been identified in Cleveland County, adults over age 65, which is the majority of our congregation, have been identified as high-risk for the virus. Therefore, in keeping with guidance from public health, government and religious leaders, the congregation council has decided that **all face-to-face, in person gatherings at Ascension are canceled through Sunday, March 29.**

Importantly, we remain both a human family and the body of Christ. Our relationships and care for each other are not canceled. Our love for neighbor is not canceled. I encourage you to call the people you usually sit in a pew with at worship, and mail cards to the people on the prayer list. I will remain available to you by phone, and I will be providing digital resources for Sunday and Wednesday worship throughout the remainder of Lent, and mailing resources to those who are not on email or the internet.

Please continue, as you are able, to make your financial gifts to support our congregation's ministry and mission. You may mail your offerings to the church at PO Box 266, Shelby, NC 28151. We also offer online giving at the website as an option for both one-time and recurring gifts. You also can designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars before March 31.

On Thursday night, the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton shared a video message, addressing concerns around COVID-19 and reminding us that even though "this is a time of disruption. It is also a time for us to live and act as faithful people of God. (over)

An Expression and Extension of God's Grace in the Shelby Area

Please continue to pray as we live together as the body of Christ in this time of uncertainty.

Let us pray.

God, our peace and our strength, we pray for our nation and the world as we face new uncertainties around coronavirus. Protect the most vulnerable among us, especially all who are currently sick or in isolation. Grant wisdom, patience, and clarity to health care workers, especially as their work caring for others puts them at great risk. Guide us as we consider how best to prepare and respond in our families, congregations, workplaces, and communities. Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern, and acts of service, trusting that you abide with us always, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

The Reverend Christina L. Auch

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