



# Hope Lutheran Church of Warren

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Pastor Dan

April 29, 2020

***There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens***

– Ecclesiastes 3:1

My friends,

All things have a season. Good times and bad times come and go. This virus too will run its course, all the more reason we praise God for His unchanging love. It looks like we are moving into a new season. It appears the restrictions are being relaxed and we can again expect a series of changes as we move forward.

At this time the stay-at-home order is in place until May 15<sup>th</sup>. I have had several people ask me when the church will reopen. The Elders and I met on Tuesday April 21<sup>st</sup> to discuss this.

As we moved into this pandemic, the government stepped down the limits on large gatherings like church services, going from no more than 500 to 200 then 100 and then below that. It is our assumption they will open things up the same way. Large gatherings will be some of the last things to be enacted.

When we are allowed to gather in sufficient numbers for a typical service again, the Elders Team will convene and set a date for “Hope’s Homecoming.” I can only offer my personal speculation here, but I think that meeting will happen late May with a late June reopening. Again, just my own personal speculation and a lot of things can change in between here and that point. As this virus has taught us, things can change rapidly. But we have also learned that God has given us all we need, and we continue to meet the challenge through His Word.

I can tell you that we are going to be doing this deliberately, considering all of the factors and numbers available to us. This is not something we are going to rush into.

That being said, I ask for your patience. This has been a fractious event. No matter when we open, there will be those who think it will be too soon, those who think it was too late, and those who think we never should have closed at all. In all things you have a right to your position.

I ask you to consider the words of St Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:9-13 (ESV):

***Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.***

Paul was speaking to a church divided over whether they should eat meat sold in the market from the temples of false gods. Eating does not bring one closer or further from God, it is an extra, an adiaphora. But the attitude in which you go about it can wound your brother or sister in Christ.

Likewise, if worship must be online for one week longer than you would like, for the sake of the body of Christ, I ask for your patience. If you have to wear a mask so others might worship without fear, for the sake of unity, please bear that burden. We are all in this together – One body, One Church, under Christ who is our head.

I long for the day I can see you again, I look forward to the celebration to come, but in all things I pray, “Thy Will be Done!” God willing, I will see you all soon my friends.

God's Peace,

- Pastor Dan