



*A Vibrant Community for All, Rooted in God's Grace.*

## Hope Lutheran Church

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Pastor Keith Marshall

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Hope Lutheran Church,

Back in March, I, along with most other people, thought our lives would be impacted for a month, maybe two. That after a relatively short amount of time, we would be able to resume normal activities safely. **Sadly, we find ourselves in mid-November with COVID cases at all-time highs, and our understanding of normal will have to change once again.**

Our in-person worship services have been tremendously successful. Gathering in worship around God's Word and Sacrament with the people of God has been an ongoing source of strength and comfort during these trying times. As set in our "Guiding Principles for Reopening Hope Lutheran Church," we committed to following all the guidelines set out by Washington State and King County. **Once again, I thank you all for following these guidelines! Your selflessness and Christ-like attitudes by wearing masks and social distancing have allowed us to gather for worship.**

On November 15th, the Governor and King County provided additional guidelines to help slow the spread of COVID in the coming weeks and months. **Thankfully our ability to gather has not been impacted by these changes. What has changed will be our ability to sing together.** Quoting King County's updated Current COVID-19 Guidance,

*“Indoor spiritual or religious services up to 25% of capacity or 200 people, whichever is less. Face masks are required. (Choirs, bands, and ensembles are not allowed. Congregational singing not allowed)”*

Reading these words is heartbreaking for me. Lifting our voices in praise to God fills my soul. **However, singing has shown to be a high-risk activity, given the amount of community spread even with masks. Therefore, we will shift our worship for the foreseeable future to the format we use for Morning Spirit.** This service includes all of the elements of worship other than congregational singing. Our pianist will still provide music in the background (Prelude, Postlude, Prayer Song, etc.) to enhance the worship experience.

While music is important to worship, it is not essential. What is essential is Jesus Christ! **He will be present in the Word, the Sacrament, and you, God’s beloved people. Therefore, let us gather for worship, confident that Jesus will meet us there!**

Blessings,

Pastor Keith Marshall