



# 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.

Last night our congregation council met to review the most recent recommendations approved by the council of the NC Synod of the ELCA and to discuss when we may re-gather in person for worship. Helpfully the synod recommendations are explicitly grounded in who we are as the body of Christ, and even more particularly as the congregations of the North Carolina Synod who have committed ourselves to nurturing vital congregations, whole and healthy leaders, engaging in collaboration and using our prophetic voice.

**Our council voted that we will not gather again face to face or in person at least until the governor of North Carolina moves the state into Phase 3.** The earliest date that has been given for that transition is Thursday, June 25. We will continue to pay attention to the infection and mortality rates for the virus in Cleveland County as we evaluate what to do next.

Like the synod council, we are grounding our decisions in our congregation's identity. We have said our values are pointing to Jesus, prayer, caring for each other and the community.

In Matthew 25:40 Jesus tells a parable about community where the king says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." (25:45) Right now, "the least of these" are those who are 65 years and older or have underlying health issues that make them more vulnerable to coronavirus. And, right now, pointing to Jesus means caring for "the least of these", not only in our congregation but in our community, by remaining apart to reduce the risk of spread of the virus.

While we remain separated, our prayers continue. And, importantly, our care for each other and community continues. The council recognizes the deep desire for connection and relationship. We are exploring ways we might meet those needs safely and responsibly.

As we navigate the pandemic's impacts on our congregation and community, please continue to share your concerns and those of the community as you hear about them. I can be reached by email at [pastorchristinaauch@gmail.com](mailto:pastorchristinaauch@gmail.com) or on the church cell phone at 704-472-7783.

Also, please continue, as you are able, to make your financial gifts to support our congregation's ministry and mission. Our mission of being an extension of the hands of Christ is more relevant than ever. Most recently, we were able to donate to the Cleveland County Potato Project when they had an opportunity to transport a surplus harvest of potatoes from Washington State to feed hungry neighbors here in Shelby. 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.

Peace be with you all.

In Christ,

*Pastor Christina*

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