

Trinity Lutheran Church will begin reentry to worship TENTATIVELY **Sunday, August 9, 2020** under the following guidelines.

In order to allow that to happen, this plan will be put into place in order to lessen the risk of spread of Covid-19 to anyone seeking to worship at Trinity.

This plan will be posted onsite in the church office, as well as submitted to TLC's council for approval as policy of the congregation.

This plan will be evaluated, monitored, executed, and updated under the supervision of one of our regular on-site staff (pastors or office admin) or their designates, including council members and other volunteer worship leaders who are offering their time, talent, and presence for the sake of our congregation's worship.

1. All of our pre-publication will encourage worshipers to consider staying home if they...

...are feeling ill or exhibiting any kind of respiratory symptom (coughing, sneezing, etc.) or any symptom associated with Covid-19 (fever, shortness of breath, chills, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, etc.);

...have knowingly been exposed to or tested positive for Covid-19;

...are at higher risk for severe illness (elderly or underlying health conditions) or have a compromised immune system (chemotherapy patients, etc.); or

...are at a higher risk of exposing others (i.e., nursing home employees, etc.).

- Additionally, all communication and signage will encourage worshipers and building occupants to practice good handwashing and sanitizing, refrain from physical contact, etc.
- Bathrooms will be occupied one person at a time.

2. Current guidelines under the Minnesota Department of Health's "Stay Safe MN" for Phase III read as follows:

*Large gatherings continue to present significant risk for increasing the spread of COVID-19. All faith communities are encouraged to provide remote services and choose **not** to open or host large gatherings. If there is evidence of COVID-19 spread within your faith community, you may be advised to stop offering in-person services until it is safe to return. Contact your local or state health department for further guidance in these situations.*

This guidance applies to a variety of gathering spaces and is based on space size, predictability and flow of movement, duration of time in designated shared space, and the potential spread of COVID19 at large gatherings, even when precautions are taken.

Gatherings in a place of worship or ceremonies such as a funeral or wedding

*Occupancy must be reduced to allow for the required social distancing of at least 6 feet between people who do not live in the same household. For indoor worship settings, occupancy must not exceed 50% of total capacity, with a maximum of 250 people in a single self-contained space. In outdoor settings, gatherings must not exceed 250 people (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaith.pdf>, *Guidance for Gatherings: Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, and Ceremonies*, , p. 2).*

- **For Trinity Lutheran Church, that means our sanctuary will be limited to approximately 100 people in order to maintain the socially distant 6-feet.**
- Our seating will be arranged in groups that include single chairs, pairs, etc.
- Worshipers are encouraged to move chairs to accommodate **the family members with whom they live** while still maintaining the 6-foot physical distance from other worshipers.

3. **Regarding masks**, current guidelines under the Minnesota Department of Health's "Stay Safe MN" for Phase III read as follows:

Face coverings are strongly recommended whenever one is gathering or in a setting with others from outside their household. Face coverings help slow the spread of COVID-19 by helping to keep the person wearing the covering from infecting others. Evidence suggests that the virus causing COVID-19 can be spread by droplets released from the nose and throat of an infected person when they cough, sneeze, sing, speak, or breathe, even if the infected person is not showing symptoms (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaith.pdf>, Guidance for Gatherings: Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, and Ceremonies, , p. 1).

- **All worshipers will be required to wear masks for worship, properly positioned over both the mouth and nose.**
- Cloth masks are available for those who request them, as supplies last. Please check with the office for the availability of those masks.
- Disposable masks will also be provided for those who don't have masks or forget theirs.

4. During the service itself:

Current guidelines under MDH's "Stay Safe MN," *INDUSTRY GUIDANCE FOR SAFELY REOPENING: FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES, PLACES OF WORSHIP, WEDDINGS, AND FUNERALS* (https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC_tcm1045-433301.pdf) read as follows:

Building and ventilation protocols: (p. 3)

...Windows, fans, and air conditioning: CDC recommends working with facility management to determine how often to change air filters and to improve ventilation and exchanges for air from outside to the extent possible.

...Continuously maximize fresh-air into the work and communal spaces.

Eliminate air recirculation.

Minimize air-flow from blowing across people.

If your facility has air conditioning:

- *Supplement ventilation-system with the use of portable HEPA filter units whenever possible.*
- *Keep systems running longer hours (24/7 if possible) to enhance the ability to filter contaminants out of the air.*

If you have the capacity to do so, the following is also recommended:

- *Maintain relative humidity levels of RH 40-60%*
- *Add a flush cycle to the controls of the HVAC system, and run HVAC systems for 2-hours before and after occupancy if your system allows for this.*

What organizations and facilities can do to minimize possible transmission: (p. 5)

...Limit the equipment, products, or items touched by participants while in the building.

...Singing or chanting is a higher-risk activity as it more forcefully expels respiratory droplets than speaking. And the act of singing may contribute to transmission of COVID-19, possibly through emission of aerosols. Congregations should refrain from singing or chanting. Congregations are strongly encouraged to offer prerecorded music/chants or only one cantor singing at a distance of at least 12 feet from anyone else during the service, while wearing a face mask.

... Adapt your practices during planned services, weddings and funerals to avoid physical contact or passing objects between individuals (e.g. greetings, collection baskets, sharing of ceremonial objects).

...Communion for some faiths is a critical part of their ritual. Faith communities that cannot make communion a touch-free encounter should follow these guidelines:

- *Communion should be distributed hand-to-hand, not hand-to-mouth.*
- *Both the distributor and the receiver of communion should wear face coverings.*

- ▶ *6 feet of distance (two arm's length) distance should be maintained between the communion distributor and the receiver. This would require both parties extending their arms as comfortably as possible.*
- ▶ *The distributor of communion should use hand sanitizer prior to initiation, and repeated after touching their face, coughing, or sneezing, or significant touching of another person or object in the process of distributing communion.*
- ▶ *Hand sanitizer should be used before touching a mask to take it down for communion, and after touching a mask to put it back on. Note: hand sanitizer must be applied thoroughly and allowed to dry to be effective.*

While worshiping in the warmer months, Trinity will follow these protocols:

- The air conditioning will be set at a temperature that will allow it to run continually while worshipers are in the building.
- All ceiling fans will be set to their highest setting.
- All doors into the sanctuary, including the northeast external door will remain open.
- Hymnals will be removed.
- Bulletins will be pre-printed and placed on the chairs, not handed out. At such point as we can dispense with printed materials and go to projection, we will.
- Congregational singing, responsive reading, and corporate prayer will be curtailed for the duration of this plan, and our services will be constructed accordingly.
- A single cantor will be used to provide sung music.
- The area for the musicians will be arranged in such a way to place them closest to open, northeast external door.
- Masks will be worn by all worship leaders and cantors for the duration of the service. This includes especially singing, but also speaking and reading.
- Communion will be served at the end of worship, and people will receive as they exit the building, following these protocols:
 - ▶ *Communion will be set-up at least 12 hours in advance of our scheduled services by people who have washed their hands thoroughly and been masked while preparing the elements.*
 - ▶ *Worshipers will receive communion from the pastors as they exit the sanctuary following the MDH recommendations above, i.e., hand-to-hand, masked, outstretched arms, etc.*

5. After worship

Current guidelines under MDH's "Stay Safe MN," *INDUSTRY GUIDANCE FOR SAFELY REOPENING: FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES, PLACES OF WORSHIP, WEDDINGS, AND FUNERALS* (https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC_tcm1045-433301.pdf) read as follows:

Work and gathering space cleaning and disinfection protocols

1. *Establish a documented sanitation schedule and checklist, identifying surfaces/equipment to be sanitized, the agent to be used, and the frequency at which sanitation occurs.*
2. *Routinely clean and disinfect all areas, such as offices, restrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment, instruments, tools, controls, etc.*
3. *Electronic devices (e.g. light-switches, circuit-breakers) should not be sanitized with a liquid agent. Consider covering switches/devices with a poly-covering that allows the user to manipulate the device without touching the switch, and hangout the poly-covering frequently. Electronic devices must be sanitized only when disconnected from the power-source, and sanitized in accordance with the listing/labeling requirements.*

4. *Personal equipment, items used in rituals or services, microphones, and phones should not be shared or, if shared, should be disinfected after each use.*
5. *Frequently clean all high-touch items, such as doorknobs, countertops, barriers, railings, handles, ends of pews, tops of chairs, and other surfaces.*
6. *Implement immediate cleaning and disinfecting of the work and gathering space if a staff, member, or visitor becomes ill with COVID-19. See CDC's Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfectingbuilding-facility.html).*

Thank you for your willingness to care for each other and especially those who might be most vulnerable in following these protocols.

Approved by Trinity Lutheran Church Council, Monday, July 13, 2020.