

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

for

St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

Lester Prairie, Minnesota

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In anticipation of resuming Divine Services on Sunday, June 7, 2020, at St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lester Prairie, the Board of Elders, pastor, vice chair and chairman met, with input from the church council and staff, to discuss what safety protocols we would be putting in place in order to best comply with governmental regulations and suggestions, and in order to minimize the chances of anyone contracting the virus at our services. We considered issues of reverence, sanitation, social distancing, and amount of time spent in the church. We have decided upon the following. We realize that some of these will be unpopular, but we ask you to bear with us as we attempt to navigate through these times. We will also review these protocols periodically and adjust them as needed/possible.

Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers:

- Church employees include the pastor, administrative assistant, DCE, janitor, financial administrator, and organists.
- Church volunteers include altar guild, elders, ushers, offering counters and Sunday School teachers. Acolytes will not be used.
- Church employees are not required to work. Church volunteers are not required to volunteer. If any employee or volunteer does not feel comfortable working, volunteering, or being present for the Divine Service, he or she is free to remain home, and will not be penalized in any way for doing so. Please communicate your desire to stay home to pastor, so that a substitute can be found. Such information will be considered privileged and will be kept confidential.
- Staff and volunteers are encouraged to wash their hands frequently (soap, water, and hand sanitizer will be provided) and maintain 6-feet of social distance between themselves and anyone who is not of their household. The wearing of face masks or face coverings in common areas or shared workspaces is required. Staff or volunteers with related health issues that prevent them from wearing a face mask or face covering are not required to.
- Offices, restrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment, and frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized daily, by church staff and contracted cleaning staff. Official church groups and volunteers are required to clean and sanitize church facilities used immediately following use by the group or individual. The chairman or vice chairman will communicate and provide direction regarding the responsibility of sanitizing and cleaning by each group. Organists will clean and sanitize the organ after each use. In order to provide

adequate time for cleaning and sanitizing the sanctuary, narthex and fellowship hall will be in a “limited use” position. Use will be limited to official church functions, all meetings, events, classes or other official church group functions, as well as the entry by vendors, will require formal scheduling by contacting and confirming with the church office. All events, classes or meetings of official church functions in the fellowship hall will be limited to a maximum capacity of 25 persons. At this time no outside rentals of the fellowship hall are allowed. If there is no scheduled event in the narthex or sanctuary within a 48 hour time period from the previous event the narthex and sanctuary will not be cleaned or sanitized.

- Staff and volunteers should stay home if they are ill, or showing symptoms of COVID-19. Likewise, if someone in their household is ill.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

- Staff or volunteers who have tested positive for COVID-19, or who have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 may not come to church until their quarantine period has ended.
- Staff and volunteers with COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home immediately.

General Guidelines:

- Please stay home if you are ill or showing symptoms of COVID-19. Likewise, if someone in your household is ill, please stay home.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, Headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

- Please know the risks and choose wisely and appropriately whether you ought to attend services. Persons over 65 and those with underlying health conditions (such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes) are at greater risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19. The Divine Service and bible study will be live-streamed and recorded on Facebook, and on the church website. The Divine service and bible study will also be broadcast on 99.9 FM in the immediate area surrounding the church for those who choose to stay home or not enter the church building.
- Please wash your hands often, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.
- Please try to avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose, and eyes, with your fingers or hands.
- Please cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, and hands washed.
- Please social distance yourself (and your children) at least 6 feet from the people around you.
- Elders will prepare Holy Communion with freshly, frequently, and thoroughly washed hands.
- The church elevator should be used by only one person/family group at a time. Please maintain 6 feet of social distance when waiting for the elevator.

- The church bathrooms should be used by only one person at a time, with hands washed thoroughly after use. Please maintain 6 feet of social distance when waiting for the bathroom.
- The church's fellowship hall, and classrooms are currently available for use with requirements of scheduling and confirmation with the church office. The fellowship hall, is in a "limited use" position with a maximum person capacity of 25 persons for meetings, events, classes or other official church group functions. Kitchen facilities are not open for use at this time.
- The seating capacity of our sanctuary is 275 people. State guidelines limit us to 50% of our capacity, or 137 people per service. For the time being (subject to change) we will offer Sunday morning Divine Service at 8:15 and 10 am., limiting our building capacity to 50%, 203 people per service. In order to stay at or below that number, there will be seating for the Divine Service in one of several areas: in the sanctuary, 137 persons; or the narthex, 25 persons; or the fellowship hall, 41 persons.
- Air circulation ceiling fans in the sanctuary will be turned off during Divine Service.
- North entry doors and education doors will remain locked.
- These protocols are available in the church entrance in printed form for distribution.

Arriving for the Divine Service:

- Access to services will only be provided at the main entrance doors. The entrance doors will be propped open, as weather and conditions allow, before services to enable touch less entry.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in the church entrance, narthex, and sanctuary.
- You are required to wear a face mask or covering when in the building. You are also required to wear a face mask or covering throughout the service, those with related health issues that prevent them from wearing a mask or covering are not required to wear a mask or covering. We will have a limited supply of masks available.
- Bulletins will be distributed by the ushers. They should not be reused. Please take the bulletin home and use it throughout the week.
- Every second pew will be available for seating, leaving 6 feet of social distance between occupied pews. Separate households may sit in the same pew if 6 feet of social distancing is maintained. Elders and ushers will be available to help direct people to appropriate places to sit.
- Hymnals will not be used for the service. All hymns to be sung will be printed in the bulletin. You may bring a hymnal from home.
- In accordance with the clear commands of Holy Scripture we will sing during the Divine Service. Limited verses will be sung.
- Please maintain social distancing.
- Please do not congregate in the narthex or block the elevator, stairs, or walkways, but proceed immediately to the sanctuary to be seated by an usher.
- Please be courteous and patient with one another.

During the Divine Service:

- Offerings will be received in the narthex. Offering plates will not be passed or used during the service.
- The pastor will thoroughly wash his hands prior to every Divine Service. The pastor will also be sanitizing his hands immediately before the consecration and distribution of Holy Communion. The assisting elder will also sanitize his hands before the distribution.
- There will be no line for communion. Rather, an elder or usher will dismiss you from your pew to immediately proceed for the distribution of Holy Communion in the narthex.
- There will be no blessing of children at communion.
- Please cup your hands; the elder will drop the wafer into your hands.
- The pastor will offer the blood of Christ in individual glasses that are placed one at a time on a small table.
- After receiving Holy Communion, you are dismissed from the Divine Service.

After the Divine Service:

- An elder or usher will usher you out of the sanctuary, starting in the back and working toward the front of the sanctuary.
- Pastor will not be greeting people at the door.
- Please do not shake hands, hug, or touch people in greeting before or after the service. Maintain social distancing.
- Please do not congregate in the narthex or block the elevator, stairs, or walkways, but proceed immediately outside to briefly greet one another at a safe distance.
- Please be courteous and patient with one another.

Outside of the Divine Service:

- The church fellowship hall is available for use for official church functions, meetings and classes in a "limited use position". Kitchen facilities are not open for use at this time. Education building facilities and spaces are open for scheduled events and classes only. Use or entry is only allowed for church staff, offering counters, council members, scheduled vendors, Sunday School staff and students, ACT and KFC participants, and contracted lease holders. Council members are encouraged to not use or enter the education building facilities beyond the copy/administrative room.
- Official acts including funerals, baptisms, and weddings will be held in accordance with these protocols and guidelines.
- Please continue to pray for one another, for the holy Christian Church throughout the world, for our congregation, and for your congregational leaders and pastor.
- Please also continue to pray for our president and nation, our governor and state, and our mayors and communities.
- All items subject to change.

The Lord bless us and keep us as we resume public worship services in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pastor, Chairmen, Vice Chairmen, and the Board of Elders

Created: June 2, 2020: Revised December 23, 2020.

Addendum of Staff Protections, Protocols and Covid 19 Staff Sick Leave Policy created June 14, 2020.