

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

May 15, 2020



Dear Church,

As many of you know we'll begin to **worship in person** at Bethlehem starting May 31. This is an exciting time for us, and I am eager to see you all face to face. I'm also deeply concerned about the ongoing presence of COVID-19 in our world. While there seems to be a break in the incidents of infection here in the Flathead, we don't know how or when cases might start to pop up again. In addition, many of us who are members of BLC are at heightened risk for severe symptoms should we get it. **Therefore I, in consultation with our Staff and Council, have proposed that we enter into this process slowly and cautiously.**

First of all, we ask that you not attend in-person worship if you are feeling sick. Even a slight cough should remind you to stay home. Certainly, if you've been exposed to someone with COVID-19, please stay home. And for your own sake, if you have heightened risk factors, please consider continuing to worship via the radio or online.

We'll be asking you to **wear a mask** when you come to church. If you don't have a mask, we'll have one for you. We ask that you take it home, wash it, and bring it with you when you come again.

There'll be **no coffee hour or fellowship time** in the building before or after worship. This is to limit the amount of time we spend in close proximity, breathing the same air. We ask that while you are in the building you **do not shake hands** with others or have any physical contact. Also, try to **maintain a 6ft space** between you and others.

Only the door facing the parking lot will be open. Please use only this door. When you arrive, you'll be **greeted by a Welcome Host**. The host will see that you get a bulletin and a mask (if you need one) and guide you to seats in the sanctuary that have been sectioned off to maintain distance between family units. **Plan to arrive early if you can.** We will not have a one-to-one "sharing of the peace" during worship (this part of worship will be done prayerfully). We will not pass the plate for the offering – baskets and plates for you to leave your offering will be located at the entrances and exits. And we will continue to have communion only the first week of each month – but it will look a little bit different (more on that at a later date.) At the end of the service the hosts will usher you out by rows.

We'll be asking that you **sing softly and without much gusto**. You'll be wearing a mask and we don't want anyone hyperventilating. Also, singing with full force causes the aerosol (tiny particles suspended in the air) of our breath to travel faster and farther, increasing the likelihood of spreading germs. Even with cloth masks aerosol leaks out the sides. I'm not asking you to not sing... only sing softly as if in prayer – God will understand.

The **bathrooms in the Commons** will be available should you need them. Please limit one person at a time in each. One of our hosts will disinfect the faucet handles and doorknobs after each use.

We'll limit the **number of people who attend each service to about 50**. This is the maximum number of people we feel we can seat in our worship space and still maintain a distance of 6-10 feet between family units. We'll have one service on Sunday morning at 9 AM and **the same service** the Wednesday following at 7 PM. We will also continue to stream live online and broadcast on the radio.

I've divided the congregation based on last names...

- Group A = A – G
- Group B = H – O
- Group C = P – Z

Please see the **separate page for what services you should attend in person**. Note: you'll alternate between listening on the radio/online, attending Sunday, and attending Wednesday.

Group A will worship online or via radio on May 31st. Group B will come to worship on Sunday May 31st at 9 AM. Group C will worship on Wednesday, June 3rd at 7 PM at the church. Then, the pattern repeats. Remember, **Sunday and the following Wednesday are the same...** so whether you're on the radio/online, on Sunday, or on Wednesday, you're getting the same thing. See additional page for all the dates and times.

BLC ministry groups will likely be able to come together beginning June 1. Quilters, Prayer Shawls, Men's Bible Study, Book Club, Exercise Group and others should make sure that your group is scheduled on the calendar so we don't have overlapping groups – contact Kellie via email at office@bethluth.org for scheduling. Groups should be no larger than 10 people, physical distancing should be kept, and food/drink should be minimal. Masks are recommended.

The Church office will be open again starting June 1. We ask that you **only come to the office if you have something to drop off**. All other matters should be handled by phone. Wearing a mask in the office is greatly appreciated.

From all that I have heard and read, **the necessity for us to alter our usual pattern of gathering and interacting will be with us for quite a while**. I trust that you will embrace the opportunities that are before us with grace, recognizing that what's important is **not what we can and can't do for ourselves, but what we must do or not do for the sake of our neighbors**.

God's light of truth has been our guide through difficult days before, and **God is with us in this time of trouble**. Let us follow God into whatever the days ahead may bring, boldly trusting in God's mercy, and extending gracious hospitality in every way possible.

Please contact me if you have questions about all of this.

Blessings and Peace,

Pastor Scott

I suggest you **highlight each time your group is listed...** That way you know when to come to church and when to listen online or on the radio!

May 31

- Online – Group A (last name A-G)
- Sun, 9am – Group B (last name H-O)

June 3

- Wed, 7pm – Group C (last name P-Z)

June 7

- Online – Group B
- Sun, 9am – Group C

June 10

- Wed, 7pm – Group A

June 14

- Online – Group C
- Sun, 9am – Group A

June 17

- Wed, 7pm – Group B

June 21

- Online – Group A
- Sun, 9am – Group B

June 24

- Wed, 7pm – Group C

June 28

- Online – Group B
- Sun, 9am – Group C

July 1

- Wed, 7pm – Group A

July 5

- Online – Group C
- Sun, 9am – Group A

July 8

- Wed, 7pm – Group B

July 12

- Online – Group A
- Sun, 9am – Group B

July 15

- Wed, 7pm – Group C

July 19

- Online – Group B
- Sun, 9am – Group C

July 22

- Wed, 7pm – Group A

July 26

- Online – Group C
- Sun, 9am – Group A

July 29

- Wed, 7pm – Group B

August 2

- Online – Group A
- Sun, 9am – Group B

August 5

- Wed, 7pm – Group C

August 9

- Online – Group B
- Sun, 9am – Group C

August 12

- Wed, 7pm – Group A

August 16

- Online – Group C
- Sun, 9am – Group A

August 19

- Wed, 7pm – Group B

August 23

- Online – Group A
- Sun, 9am – Group B

August 26

- Wed, 7pm – Group C

August 30

- Online – Group B
- Sun, 9am – Group C

September 2

- Wed, 7pm – Group A

