

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

Procedures for Returning to In Person Indoor Worship Services in the Time of COVID-19

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church respects the dignity of all humans. The safety of our church community and neighbors is important to us. We will do our best to keep everyone safe from COVID-19 as we return to worship. **In person indoor worship will only be conducted if our county infection rates stay below 5% or the case rate is less than 20 people per 100,000.** We will be monitoring these metrics from the county's health department daily. While our metrics are below 5% or the case rate is below 20 people per 100,000, these are the minimum requirements for all individuals entering our church. If you feel that the requirements are not enough to keep you safe, you are welcome to add necessary precautions for yourself, you can choose not to participate if something makes you uncomfortable, and/or everyone is welcome to attend our Zoom services which will continue for the foreseeable future. Our goal is that everyone has the option to worship in the way they feel is best suited to their family's needs. Each in person service will begin with a review by the pastor of the protocols for physical distancing, movement in the space, limitations on physical contact, ways to receive communion, procedures for exiting the church, etc. This plan is based upon the best recommendations from the CDC, our Governor, health officials, and ELCA leadership but it is an ever-evolving situation that will continually be reviewed adjusted accordingly.

In line with the recommendations we have to date, we have put together the following procedure for in person indoor worship:

Participant Check – All clergy, ushers, lectors, musicians, altar guild, etc. will be required to check their temperature and display a normal temperature on the day of helping with worship.

Protocols for Altar Guild – Altar Guild members will be required to wear masks and wash their hands according to CDC guidelines before preparing communion for service. Bread and wine will not be brought up the aisle after the offering, but will be placed directly on the altar and covered prior to the service.

Worshiper Check – All worshippers are welcome to attend, but we ask that if you are sick that you stay at home. If you have a fever, are coughing, have a sore throat, loss of smell, or unexplained shortness of breath, please attend on Zoom and not in person. If you have been in close contact with anyone who is exhibiting any of these symptoms, please attend on Zoom and not in person.

Attendance/Capacity – During this phase it is difficult to give an exact number to how many people can attend an in-person service. Attendance numbers will be determined by family size and the ability to distance within our physical space. Please call the church office in advance to arrange for a space for you and/or your family at worship. This will allow us to create a seating plan. We will continue to monitor the Governor's recommendations so the number able to worship in person may change from time to time.

Restricted Rooms – Worshippers will not be allowed to enter the Sunday School rooms, the library or multipurpose room during Sunday worship. Only authorized staff may enter those rooms or participants only when an activity is being held.

Masks – Everyone in attendance will be expected to wear masks when entering the church, during church, and when exiting. The pastor, worship assistant, lectors, and musicians (when leading the church up front) may remove their masks, but they must be at a safe distance from others to avoid the spreading of respiratory deposits. The pastor, worship assistant, and ushers will wear masks when communion is being served and while processing.

Hand Sanitizer – Hand sanitizer will be available, but it is recommended that you also carry your own hand sanitizer, so you have it with you as needed.

Physical Distancing – Everyone in attendance (except for members living in the same household) should maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from each other at all times. This is especially important when masks are removed during the brief moment when we take communion.

Restrooms – The restrooms will be available for use while the church is open. Please make certain to wash your hands following CDC guidelines after using the restroom.

Bulletins – A single use bulletin will be provided with all the information necessary for the service. We will be removing the hymnals and Bibles from the pews at this time for the safety of our worshippers.

Cleaning Protocol – All pews, door handles, faucet handles, light switches, and other commonly touched surfaces will be cleaned with disinfectants prior to each scheduled service. The restrooms will be completely disinfected between services.

Signs – Signs will be posted throughout the church to help you navigate utilizing these new procedures.

Signing in - When signing in, people would need to acknowledge release of liability for the church. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your and your family's health, and you may have your temperature taken.

Entering the Church/Sanctuary

1. We will only have one set of doors open for entry into the church. The doors to the multipurpose room and the door in-between will remain locked from the outside.
2. You must wear a mask when entering the church.
3. Upon entering proceed to the Usher. The usher will provide you a single use bulletin if you desire one. There will be no physical contact with the usher. (No handshakes or hugs please)
4. If you forgot your mask, the usher will offer a disposable one to you.
5. The usher will tell you where to sit in the sanctuary. You must sit by household. Some pews will be marked off. You may not sit in those pews. Households should be approximately 6 feet apart from other households. Consider bringing a cushion since we have removed them from the benches.
6. You may talk with other worshippers outside, but we ask that you social distance as much as possible and that you keep your masks on.

During the Service

1. We will not be passing a collection plate during the service. There will be a collection plate at the back of the sanctuary. Please drop your offering in the collection plate when you enter or exit the sanctuary.
2. Please follow the usher's directions as to which pews you may sit in.
3. Again, those leading the service will follow the guidelines mentioned above with regards to the wearing of masks – parishioners will wear them at all times.
4. The worshippers will not be singing during the service until we have clearance from the health department. We will still have music. You may hum along if you like.
5. As mentioned above we will not be passing the collection plate. If you forgot to place your offering in the plate when you entered, you may do so as you exit.
6. When we pass the peace, there will be no physical contact whatsoever. We ask that you stay in your pew smile and nod your greeting from a distance.
7. This will be the procedure for offering Holy Communion during the service. **Note, you are not required to participate in Holy Communion if you are uncomfortable with any of the following procedures.**
 - a. The pastor, worship assistant and usher(s) will apply their masks and then sanitize their hands before touching any of the communion items.
 - b. The usher will signal worshippers one household at a time to the front of the church where they will receive communion. With the exception of only one household at a time being served at each "X" at the communion rail. There will be no physical contact between worshippers and those assisting with Holy Communion.
 - c. If you cannot make it to the front of the church, but desire to have communion, please let the usher know when he offers you your turn to commune. Communion can be brought to you after everyone else has communed.

Exiting the Sanctuary/Church after Worship

1. Please check your surroundings at the end of the service, and please clean up your pew. Take your bulletin and any used paper products, wrappers, etc. with you as you exit so that someone else does not need to touch any items you leave behind. There will be garbage cans available to toss any unwanted items available as you exit the church.
2. Please wear your mask as you leave the sanctuary and the church building.
3. The usher(s) will dismiss the congregation by rows. Please wait to be dismissed.
4. You must exit the church using the doors directly to your left as you leave the sanctuary. All other doors will only be used in the event of an emergency.
5. We will not have a receiving line in the church after the service. If you wish to speak with the pastor after the service, these are the guidelines you must follow. The pastor will be wearing a mask. Please keep your mask on while talking to the pastor. There will be no physical contact such as handshakes and hugs. Maintain social distancing while waiting to speak to the pastor and keep your visit short if others are waiting to avoid congestion.
 - a. Weather permitting, the pastor will be outside on the patio to greet you after the service.
 - b. If the weather does not allow for the pastor to stand outside, the pastor will remain off to the side in the Narthex.

What if...

- If the county's Positive Test Rate goes above 5% and the case rate is over 20 per 100,000, we will notify everyone we have a current number for through the call system that in person indoor services have been canceled but zoom services will continue.
- If someone from the congregation were to test positive after worshipping with us, we would immediately contact the local health authorities and begin notifying those who were in attendance at the service or activity. (The person's identity would be kept confidential.)
- If there is a positive case from someone who has worshipped with us, all services and activities would be canceled for a minimum of two weeks (or 14 calendar days) and during that time the church would be cleaned and sanitized unless the local health authorities recommend additional time.
- If the church had to close because of a positive case, the reopening committee would need to make an assessment of the situation and ensure the facilities have been cleaned properly. Once they felt it was safe, a recommendation would need to be made to council. The council would need a majority vote to reopen in-person services again.
- If you or someone you have come into contact with someone who has tested positive, is being tested, or is experiencing symptoms, please do not attend in person worship, please attend on Zoom only.
- If you have someone in your family has been around someone who has been tested positive, we encourage you to be tested, and please let us know so we can plan.