



Christ Lutheran Church
126 Front Street, PO Box 166
Cottonwood, MN

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

Christ Lutheran Church, with guidance from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA), has formulated a plan of action to safely re-open our facilities for in-person worship services and other in-person activities. As a community of faith, our primary concern is to follow Jesus' commandment to "love thy neighbor." This means it is paramount that we safeguard the health and well-being of our members, staff and general public. To achieve this goal, this plan was developed in consultation with local health professionals and adheres to the guidelines set forth by Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and the Minnesota Department of Health. **If there is a spike in the number of positive cases for the safety of all, in-person worship and activities may need to move back to other benchmarks including online/cable worship only.** Christ Lutheran Church will make every effort to enforce the guidelines put forth in this plan to ensure the safety of all.

General Guidelines: As we re-open our church home for regular in-person services and other activities, there are certain individuals for whom it might be best to remain home and continue to enjoy virtual services until pandemic restrictions are lessened. These general guidelines provide some advice on making the personal decisions whether or not to return to in-person services.

- Those in high risk categories – over 65 years or immune-suppressed and with other underlying health conditions are encouraged to stay home at this time. Worship services will continue to be broadcast on cable station 180 and linked on YouTube.
- Anyone (staff or parishioner) who is experiencing any symptoms associated with COVID-19 should stay home. These include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste and smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Anyone who is living with someone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (see above) should stay home.
- Anyone who begins to feel unwell while they are in the building should leave immediately and isolate themselves at home.
- Social/physical distance guidelines of 6 feet will be observed throughout the church building.
- All individuals *are required* (per State of Minnesota Executive Order 20-81 beginning 7/25/2020) to wear a face covering or mask when they are able while in the building with others. A very limited number of face masks will be made available to those who do not arrive with one. This is to mitigate aerosol spread and to be mindful of fellow attendees. The wearing of a face mask is a sign of care for others, and it is required (there are some exemptions – see the end of this document).

Building and Occupancy: The guidelines below are designed to ensure all attendees at in-person services and other activities are safe from the time they enter the building until the time they exit. Please review them carefully and adhere to them while in the building.

- Using formulas provided by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety the occupant load of the sanctuary has been determined to be 180 chairs. As of 6/15/2020, the current Department of

Health guidelines limit occupancy to no more than 50% of this amount to ensure social/physical distancing. Therefore, a strict limit of 90 persons will be enforced for all gatherings.

- A designated individual will be responsible for counting all arrivals to the church and preventing attendance from exceeding limitations.
- A designated individual will maintain record of attendance which will be kept for worship and other activities to help ensure information is available for contact tracing should this become necessary. This can include a photo taken of where attendees were seated. This is to ensure we can do contact tracing if someone who attends worship or other activities tests positive. If there is evidence of COVID-19 spread associated with CLC, we may be advised by local or state health departments to cancel or postpone in-person services until it is safe to return.
- Some spaces in the church will remain sealed off to the public to minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitization. These areas will be clearly marked.
- For all gatherings, individuals are asked to only use the Front Doors for entering and exiting the building. Care will be taken to ensure that those needing the elevator will still have access to it.
- Please avoid congregating at entrance points; stagger your entry into the church building.
- Individuals should avoid congregating for conversation inside the church building. Such fellowship is welcomed outside of the church building while maintaining social/physical distancing. Meals, coffee fellowship and treats will not be offered.
- When possible, doors will be propped open to minimize contact with door handles. In other instances, door attendants may be used to open doors for those gathering.
- Markings will be used to indicate seating areas in the sanctuary that maintain a minimum social/physical distance of 6 feet. The first row should be no closer than 16 feet away from where worship leaders are likely to be since they need to project their voice further. Every other row of chairs will not be utilized and those that are will have alternating seating on both ends and in the center.
- The sanctuary of the church will be filled from front to back to prevent people from walking by others who may be seated along the aisles. The space will be emptied from back to front, again, to ensure social/physical distancing. Those individuals with mobility concerns may request special arrangements.
- All persons should keep coats, hats and other personal items with them at all times. The coat racks will not be used to reduce the number of places that need to be cleaned/sanitized.
- Only the restroom on the sanctuary level of the church will be open. Please avoid congregating by the restroom; maintain social/physical distancing of 6 feet.
- Hand sanitizer will be made available throughout the church. All are encouraged to use it frequently when hand washing is not an option.
- Gatherings shall be limited to regular services – all other gatherings will be considered.

Worship Service Guidelines: The following guidelines explain how services will be conducted until this plan is changed and additional guidance is given by the Minnesota Department of Health and the CDC. Please note that larger gatherings are still only allowed for regular services. Social gatherings or celebrations (i.e. potlucks, quilting, etc) are still limited to 10 or fewer attendees.

- Hymnals and children's activity bags have been removed from the sanctuary to help alleviate surface contamination.
- Chairs and their cushions will be sanitized between services.
- Music will be played, but singing is not recommended as studies have shown this to be a higher-risk activity that forcefully expels respiratory droplets into the air.
- If you are wearing a face mask, you are invited to softly join in unison parts of the worship service. You are also invited to mouth the words silently or speak them in your heart and mind.

This prevents abundant spread of aerosols into the environment. There will be no loud speaking in unison, as with the liturgy, creed or prayers.

- There will be no physical contact at any point during the service. The passing of the peace will occur but will be done without physical contact.
- If there are children present in worship, there may be a children’s message offered. However, children will remain in the seated areas with their family.
- There will not be passing of the collection plates. Offerings should be deposited in a designated area as worshipers enter/exit the sanctuary.
- Printed copies of the bulletin will be made available and minimal person-to-person contact will be implemented for distribution. The bulletins are asked to be taken home with individuals and disposed of in their own homes.
- Communion will be conducted with minimal person-to-person contact.
- The service will continue to be recorded and broadcasted on cable station 180 and on YouTube. “Drive Up” worship will continue as weather permits.
- Baptisms may be done on an arranged basis with limited contact and social/physical distancing. Please contact the church office with questions regarding this.

Sanitizing of Facilities: The following spaces and items in the church will be sanitized at least twice a week, once prior to services and once after each service.

- Doorknobs/handles and doors
- Handrails
- Elevator (buttons, doors, etc.)
- Light switches
- Bathrooms
- Chairs and cushions
- Offering receptacle
- Sound equipment (controls, board, microphone, etc.)
- Musical equipment (piano, organ, etc.)

To minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitation, the sanctuary will be accessible to the general public only for regular worship services.

Other spaces in the church will be cleaned and sanitized as per the normal schedule.

Heating and Cooling/HVAC: The heating and cooling system in the church building will remain on 24/7 to ensure maximum filtration of recirculated air. Filters in the system will be replaced on a regular schedule. Special effort will be made to ensure air does not blow across individuals. No ceiling, floor or stand fans should be utilized in the building during events. Whenever possible, the doors to the outside will be opened and the AC system may be turned off.

Use of Church Facilities by Outside Organizations will be revisited at a later date.

Staff Guidelines: All staff members are expected to abide by the guidelines set forth in this plan and assist in the enforcement of them. Specifically, staff should:

- Not report to work if they are feeling ill or have any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 set forth in the *General Guidelines* section.
- Practice social/physical distancing of at least 6 feet when in the church building. They are strongly encouraged to utilize face masks when it is not possible to social/physical distance.
- Sanitize frequently used and shared equipment such as copiers, keyboards/mice, phones, filing cabinet and desk handles and locks, door knobs, etc.
- Wash hands thoroughly and use hand sanitizer when this is not possible.
- Wash and sanitize work surfaces before assembling any items for distribution to the public (bulletins, newsletters, etc.).

- Report any concerns with the implementation of this plan to the Congregational President or members of the Preparedness Plan Task Force.

Resources Consulted in Preparation of this Plan:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Coronavirus (COVID-19) -

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2Findex.html

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Coronavirus - www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/

MDH: Guidance for Faith-Based Communities Considering In-Person Services -

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/communities.html>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidfaith.pdf>

https://mn.gov/deed/assets/worship-guidance-ACC_tcm1045-433301.pdf

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

Resources to help leaders and members -

https://www.elca.org/publichealth?_ga=2.45616228.1964333910.1592682744-1103690243.1516469274

Executive Order 20-81 begins 07/25/2020 regarding face coverings:

<https://www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-81.pdf>

Excerpts from Executive Order 20-81

2. Beginning on Friday, July 24, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., Minnesotans must wear a face covering in indoor businesses and indoor public settings, as described in this order and the related industry guidance, available at the Stay Safe Minnesota website(<https://staysafe.mn.gov>), as well as any other guidance referenced in this order. Workers must also wear face coverings outdoors when it is not possible to maintain social distancing. When leaving home, Minnesotans are strongly encouraged to have a face covering with them at all times to be prepared to comply with the requirements of this Executive Order.

3. **Definitions.** For purposes of this Executive Order, the following terms are defined as follows:

a. A “face covering” must be worn to cover the nose and mouth completely, and can include a paper or disposable face mask, a cloth face mask, a scarf, a bandanna, a neck gaiter, or a religious face covering. Minnesotans are encouraged to refer to CDC guidance on How to Make Cloth Face Coverings, available at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html>.

Medical-grade masks and respirators are sufficient face coverings, but to preserve adequate supplies, their purchase and use is discouraged for Minnesotans who do not work in a health care setting or in other occupations that require medical-grade protective equipment (e.g., certain construction occupations). Masks that incorporate a valve designed to facilitate easy exhaling, mesh masks, or masks with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design or material, or vents are not sufficient face coverings because they allow exhaled droplets to be released into the air.

b. “Business” and “businesses” are broadly defined to include entities that employ or engage workers, including private-sector entities, public-sector entities, non-profit entities, and state, county, and local governments.

c. “Worker” and “workers” are broadly defined to include owners, proprietors, employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers, and interns.

d. “Social distancing” means individuals keeping at least 6 feet of distance from other individuals who are not members of their household.

e. “Household” means a group of individuals who share the same living unit.

f. “Living unit” or “living units” are broadly defined to include single family homes; mobile homes; shelters and similar facilities; family foster care homes; individual units of multi-unit dwellings; hotel or motel rooms; dormitory rooms; residential programs licensed under Minnesota Statutes 2019, Chapter 245D; and assigned units or rooms in a hospital, long-term care facility, residential treatment facility, or correctional facility. Additionally, a “living unit” or “living units” includes any other setting used as a residence and shared only with members of the same household.

g. “Higher education institution” means all post-secondary institutions, including but not limited to institutions licensed and registered with the Office of Higher Education, with a physical campus in the State.

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8. Exempt individuals. The following individuals are exempt from face covering requirements of this Executive Order:

a. Individuals with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the individual to maintain a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, individuals who have a medical condition that compromises their ability to breathe, and individuals who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance. These individuals should consider using alternatives to face coverings, including clear face shields, and staying at home as much as possible.

b. Children who are five years old and under. Those who are under two-years-old should never wear a face covering due to the risk of suffocation. Those who are at least two are encouraged to wear a face covering if they can do so in compliance with CDC guidance on How to Wear Cloth Face Coverings, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html> (i.e., without frequently touching or removing the covering).

c. Individuals at their workplace when wearing a face covering would create a job hazard for the individual or others, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety and health standards and guidelines.

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10. Circumstances where mandatory face coverings may be temporarily removed. Face coverings required under Paragraph 9 of this Executive Order may be temporarily removed under the following circumstances:

a. When participating in organized sports in an indoor business or indoor public space while the level of exertion makes it difficult to wear a face covering.

b. When exercising in an indoor business or public indoor space such as a gym or fitness center, while the level of exertion makes it difficult to wear a face covering, provided that social distancing is always maintained.

c. When testifying, speaking, or performing in an indoor business or public indoor space, in situations or settings such as theaters, news conferences, legal proceedings, governmental meetings subject to the Open Meeting Law (Minnesota Statutes 2019, Chapter 13D), presentations, or lectures, provided that social distancing is always maintained. Face shields should be considered as an alternative in these situations.

Members of the Preparedness Plan Task Force

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