

COVID – 19 Preparedness Plan

For St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
9141 County Road 101
Corcoran, MN

Plan Administrator (PA): Rev. Matthew V. Moss, Senior Pastor
Facilities Manager (FM): John Draskovich

Date: Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Revised for E.O. 20-81 on Saturday, July 25, 2020

**This Plan is will be updated as better information becomes available
Each revision will be dated and updates will be in red.**

On Wednesday, July 22, Governor Walz issued Executive Order 20-81, requiring masks to be worn at all indoor businesses and public gathering spaces. This mandate includes churches both during the work week and throughout the worship services. We will respect the various exemptions given in section 8 of the E.O. as well as the temporary removals included in section 10. Under letter C. of section 10 we find provision for the pastors to remove their masks in the Chancel during the Service of the Word as they are physically distanced from the congregation. Neither the pastors nor the Safety Team have the authority or ability to inspect, question, or request the reasons why an attending member may not be wearing a mask. We sincerely desire to respect our members' right to privacy over medical and mental health matters. We will attempt to comply with the Governor as much as we are able, but must specify that the Church as an agent of Grace in the Kingdom of God's Right Hand has no authority to carry out civil government's enforcement of this mandate. The only form of discipline the Church possesses is the Binding Key (so-called "excommunication") which is only to be used in cases of open, unrepentant Sin against the clear Word of God. That does not apply to this issue, and even in cases of excommunication, the excommunicated are always invited and desired to be present to hear God's Word for the goal of repentance and faith. We cannot and will not ask members or visitors to leave the Divine Service if they are not wearing a mask.

A. STAFF PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

1. Sick Staff Must Stay Home

1.1. All employees of St. John's Church and official volunteers (henceforth "Staff") must fill out a Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) "Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist". These are provided on the table in the main entry way.

1.2. Any staff who marks "yes" to a symptom must return home and should notify a superior. If a staff member has been in close contact with a household member with COVID should not be at work until the quarantine period is over.

1.2.1. 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.

1.3. If any staff member or service attendee should be diagnosed with COVID-19, they should contact the PA as soon as they find out to initiate the following communication protocol:

1.3.1. Establish days(s) and time(s) this person was present on site

1.3.2. List anyone with whom this person had direct contact

1.3.3. The PA will notify those directly contacted persons immediately

1.3.4. The PA will notify the FM for targeted sanitization

1.3.5. The PA will notify all other members who were in the building that weekend whether they had direct contact or not

1.3.6. The PA will maintain communication with staff who may be ill and ensure privacy

1.4. Staff who are not sick, but live in close contact with someone who is, shall follow the MDH guidelines for staying home and returning to work:

1.4.1. Stay home, separate yourself from others in your household, and do not share

anything (e.g., utensils, phone) for 14 days.

1.4.2. Work from home if you can.

1.4.3. At the end of this period notify your supervisor of your intent to return.

1.4.4. If you become sick (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell), continue to stay home and follow section 1.5 below.

1.4.5. Return to work after 14 days if you do not develop symptoms.

1.5. Staff who become sick shall follow the MDH guidelines for staying home and returning to work as follows:

1.5.1. Separate yourself from others in your household, do not share anything (e.g. utensils, phone) and stay at home for at least 10 days, and for 3 days with no fever (without fever reducing medicine) and improvement of respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath) whichever is longer.

1.5.2. Work from home if you can.

1.5.3. When section 1.5.1. is complete notify your supervisor of your intent to return.

1.5.4. You may not return to work earlier than 10 days, and for 3 days with no fever (without-fever reducing medicine) and improvement of respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath) whichever is longer.

1.5.5. Stay 6 feet away from co-workers and visitors, whenever possible.

1.5.6. If it is difficult to stay 6 feet away, wear a mask.

1.6. The current sick leave of staff at St. John's is as follows, **Note:** This is temporary as the BOA will be tailoring sick leave specific to COVID-19 at their upcoming meeting. If a case should arise before then we will deal with it under the provisional recommended leave which at this time is to continue paying them for the duration of their stay at home period.

1.6.1. Sick Leave- All full-time, regular employees receive five days of paid sick leave per calendar year. Full-time teachers receive ten sick days to be used during the school year. No salary will be paid in lieu of sick leave. No carry over of sick leave allowed.

1.6.2. Personal Leave- All full-time employees are entitled to one day of paid personal leave per year. (School staff, per school year - others, per calendar year.) If additional days are granted by the appropriate administrator (or Board), such days will be without pay. Personal days should, if at all possible, be requested of the appropriate administrator (or Board) 30 days in advance.

1.7. All "at risk" staff are encouraged to stay home and participate remotely to the best of their ability. Please consult the CDC's "People Who Are at Higher Risk of Severe Illness" (<http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautiuous/people-at-higher-risk.html>)

2. Social Distancing- Staff Must Be at least Six-Foot Apart

2.1. Staff who are able to work from home must work from home

2.2. Staff who must come in and share office space should stagger shifts

2.3. Staff meetings should not have more than 10 people

2.3.1. The chair of every meeting should communicate with the FM for which space to use, when the meeting is to be held, and how many will be attending

2.3.2. The FM will assign space for the meeting and provide instructions for cleaning

3. Staff Hygiene and Source Controls

- 3.1. Staff should regularly wash their hands with soap and water and should notify the FM immediately if a restroom soap dispenser is running low.
- 3.2. Staff who will be working in close proximity to others should wear masks, preferably bringing their own for washing at home and reuse.
- 3.3. The FM maintains a small supply of gloves and disinfectants. Congregation members are encouraged to donate these while we also order from our distributors.
- 3.4. Hand washing and “cover your cough” signs are posted throughout the halls and bathrooms
- 3.5. All doors that can be left open are propped. Only the external doors and the single-stall bathroom doors are to be opened and closed. Halls and rooms marked “This Section Closed” are not to be used by any staff or attendees.
- 3.6. Drinking fountains have been turned off if able to be, taped off if otherwise
- 3.7. Food is not to be shared and the fellowship hall is a closed section of the building
- 3.8. Face tissues and open waste bins are provided throughout the building, but members may wish to donate tissue boxes as well.

B. BUILDING AND VENTILATION PROTOCOLS

General Building Condition: Since the FM has continued working his normal hours since the Stay-at-Home order in March, he and the Board for Property & Grounds have maintained the various utility systems and will continue to monitor them, even in the “closed sections” of the building.

C. DROP-OFF, PICK-UP, AND DELIVERY PROTOCOLS

All deliveries, whether by official companies, or by members making donations, should be left in the entryway at door 1. A staff member will bring the items inside the interior doors and stock the items.

D. WORK AND GATHERING SPACE CLEANING & DISINFECTING PROTOCOLS

1. The FM will provide the PA with an up-to-date sanitation schedule and checklist, identifying surfaces/equipment to be sanitized, the agent to be used, and the frequency at which sanitation occurs. The PA may share this with other staff or members who desire to know about the sanitization of a certain space or equipment.
2. All areas that are not “closed sections” will be routinely cleaned, this includes restrooms, staircases, offices, Auxiliary Room, nursery, and Sanctuary.
3. Cleaning products will be available for Pastors and Safety Team to wipe down all pews, railings, and door handles following each Divine Service, wedding, or funeral.

4. The FM will oversee or delegate the immediate cleaning of a space where a staff, attendee, or visitor has been once that person has become infected and notifies the PA.
5. The FM will notify the PA and secretaries if cleaning products are needed so donations can be solicited from members. If the items must be ordered they are to be ordered in a timely fashion so weekend service schedules may continue.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING

The PA and FM met with members of the Safety Team on Wednesday, May 27 for training. Other staff members have received email communication about their tasks. Paid employees will be briefed when they return to the facility and are not working from home.

The secretary and Board for Property & Grounds will not be taking facility rental requests at this time. The pastors will go over this Plan with any wedding party or funeral director should one of these additional religious services be required during this phase of reopening.

F. PROTOCOLS FOR THE DIVINE SERVICES

The following protocols were provided to the congregation in the letter read at the Live-Stream Service of the Word on Sunday, May 24, 2020. Additional notes and adjustments for new information will be marked in red.

Before Services:

- We must strongly encourage those who are elderly, at risk, or have underlying medical conditions to refrain from attending for the time being.
- If you are ill, or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or have come in contact with those who have, we insist you stay home until healthy and no longer self-quarantining.
- Initially we will limit the maximum attendance to 50 persons per service (less than 1/7 of our capacity), **now increased to 75.**
- We will begin offering four services (the number of services/persons may change according to need)
 - o ~~Saturday at 5:00 P.M.~~
 - o ~~Sunday at 9:30 A.M. & 3:00 P.M.~~ Sunday at 8 & 10:30 A.M.
 - o Monday at 7:00 P.M. – the sanctuary being disinfected in-between each service
- Those who wish to attend must notify us via the website Sign-Up Genius, so that we can maintain predictable size of the gathering. Links will be sent out each week via email, St. John's website, and Facebook page.
- The Sunday morning service (8:00 A.M.) will be Live-Streamed for those unable to attend.

Arriving for Services:

- Only Entrance 1 will be unlocked and manned by the Safety Team.
- Hand sanitizers will be available between the entry and sanctuary.

- Certain hallways and bathrooms will be closed by the custodians to limit areas for cleaning.
- Please adhere to all other signage or instructions that are given as you enter and exit the building.
- You are encouraged to wear a mask as you enter, exit, or at any time when not social distancing.
- Since the Offering will not be collected during the services, please leave it in the plate upon entering.
- We will use full-printed bulletins instead of hymnals and pews will be marked off for distancing.
 - + Notes and updates in the bulletin will be important for following updated safety protocols as we learn more about what is and is not safe in this novel illness.

During the Services:

- Liturgy and Hymnody will be abridged.
 - + hymns/liturgy will be sung by the pastors from opposite sides of the chancel. We cannot require you not to sing, but ask that you consider the risk until we have more clarity on studies of this aspect.
 - +to make up for this lack of liturgy and hymnody, our Wednesday evening prayer service – which is Live-Stream only, no one in attendance, and which has till now been a spoken, devotional service, will now include longer musical prelude and postlude, and the singing of hymns.
- Pastors will thoroughly wash immediately prior to the Service of the Sacrament.
- Distribution of Holy Communion will be “walk-through” instead of at the rail.
 - + hand sanitizers will be provided on stands before and after the procession through Communion for those who may lower and raise masks during the Communion process
- After each person the Chalice will be wiped with a purificator soaked in grain-alcohol (75.5% abv).
- Individual glass cups will be offered at one of the services each week, noted on the Sign-Up website, placing only a few cups per tray to eliminate the accidental touching of multiple cups.
- Acolytes, ushers, worship assistants, Sunday School, nursery will not be used at this time.
- Safety team members, money, counters, and altar guild have received additional instructions relative to their tasks and building safety protocols.

After the Services:

- Please do not shake hands, hug, or touch people in greeting, and do your best to socially distance.
- Please do not congregate in the narthex and hallways, but proceed to the parking lot.

Beyond the Divine Services:

- Bible studies will be available on our website, YouTube, and Facebook.
- We will continue to Live-Stream a Wednesday evening prayer service.
- Weddings, Baptisms, and Funerals may be held during this phase, but must follow the same protocols listed here. Live-streaming can be made available to include those not able to attend.
- Continue to pray for one another, your congregation & school, and your pastors and teachers.
- Continue to pray for your governor, legislature, and community.
- Call one another, visit when and where it is allowed, and remember our homebound members.

G. ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS FOR OCCUPANCY

1. This manual as well as updated letters and bulletins will be available on the website and noted on the Sign-up Genius website for those who register for services. Print versions will be made available for those who desire it as well.
2. Signage is already posted throughout the building.
3. Attendees should be mindful of social distancing when entering the facility and proceeding through the halls to the sanctuary and out again
4. A half hour before each service the PA will print a list of all registered attendees and share that with the Safety Team.
 - a. If the maximum capacity has been reached, walk-ins will be asked to leave and sign-up for another service
 - b. If the maximum capacity has not been reached, walk-ins will be welcomed until the maximum is reached.
5. The main doorway will be locked after the service has begun regardless of the number of attendees.
6. The Safety Team has already met and submitted their updated task list to the PA. They are committed to helping St. John's members and guests gather for worship safely and to the glory of God.