



GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING AGAIN AT FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

June 2020

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength; . . . love your neighbor as yourself.

Mark 12:30

Dear Friends,

With heart and mind and soul we offer praise to God as we regather for worship. After careful study to ensure the safety of all, the following letter explains our plan. Thanks for your patience and willingness to wait.

Peace,

Pastor John

In-person worship will begin at 9:00 a.m. on June 21, 2020. Please plan to arrive 40 minutes early at church, as we have a few health and safety protocols for people to observe.

HOW HAVE WE COME UP WITH OUR GUIDELINES?

Gathering together in-person again as a Faith Lutheran Church community is a difficult and complex decision. The Pastors, Executive Committee, Facilities Committee, and Worship Committee have worked hard to decide how and when to gather. We are adopting the language of the ELCA and will refer to our next steps as Gathering Again.

First, we would like to issue a heartfelt and hearty THANK YOU to Pastor John, Pastor Dennis, Danny, and the Faith Executive Committee for their amazing efforts to continue opportunities for our Faith community to worship, learn and connect. We are grateful for the phone calls, emails, prayers, online videos, and podcasts in an extremely difficult time.

Second, we would like to thank the congregation for their patience during this crisis. We would like to ask that you continue to be patient as the Faith leaders work to figure out what we should do next.

This response to the crisis and easing of restrictions so that we might begin Gathering Again is the result of much prayer, research, and discussion by the Pastors, Executive Committee, Facilities Director Mike Dautremont, Parish Nurse Christy Pratt, Worship Director Deb Aldrich, Director of Youth and Technology Danny Stone, and the various committees and members who provided input. We have consulted with ELCA resources from the Southeastern Synod, various local and state Health Department officials, the CDC, and other published guidelines.

Our primary concern is that we continue sharing the Word of God with our congregation and others and to Gather Again in person in a safe manner.

We recognize that in Gathering Again we are not “going *back* to church.” Our church practices from before the COVID-19 crisis are not compatible with safe practices in today’s circumstances. However, we will move *forward* to hearing and sharing the Word. We consider this a continuously evolving process as we respond to events, resources, and safety measures. We ask, once more, for your patience as we establish what we are going to do as our next steps.

WHAT WILL BE OUR PROCESS?

PHASE ONE

Phase One of our response to COVID-19 has been to cancel all in-person gatherings.

PHASE TWO

Before we are able to move to Phase Two, we will be following the guidelines set by the Linn County Health Department for Phased Reopening of Churches:

Recommended Criteria for Phased Reopening

Phase One	
Epidemiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased test positivity rate for at least 14 days Sustained reduction in number of cases for at least 14 days Decrease in deaths for at least 14 days
Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient PPE for all health care workers even if cases double Sufficient face masks available to provide to patients seeking care, even if cases double More discharges than admissions for COVID-19 within a 7 day period
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All cases interviewed for contact elicitation Contacts elicited for at least 90% of cases Capacity to monitor all confirmed cases and their contacts Capacity* to test all people who are symptomatic <p>* Testing capacity is influenced by a loosening of testing criteria, availability of nasal swabs to obtain sample, and the availability of PPE.</p>
<p>Move to Phase Three if the criteria above is met, a reduction in cases for an additional 14 days is observed, and a vaccine is available.</p>	
Phase Two	
Epidemiology	Sustained reduction in cases for an additional 14 days
Health Care	Same as Phase One
Public Health	Same as Phase One
Phase Three	
All previous criteria is met and vaccine is available	

In Phase Two of our process we will:

1. Communicate with all members through multiple avenues: the Faith website, Facebook, emails, and USPS mail, and personal phone calls, if needed.
2. Encourage those with underlying health conditions, those who are immunocompromised, or those who are over 65 to not attend in-person services at this time. It is completely understandable if people choose not to attend in-building services. Those decisions are fully respected, as are the decisions to attend.
3. Make extra efforts to contact those who live alone, are grieving, are uncomfortable with technology, or struggle with mental health concerns.
4. Survey members to discover who does not receive or who does not prefer to receive digital/online messages from the church.
5. Mail sermons, bulletins, Pastor's Class materials, and devotionals to individuals who wish to receive church information by mail.
6. Continue with the podcast sermons and live streaming of services. However, copyrighted material like music is not allowed to be on our website or on Facebook for any period of time.
7. Expand our digital options to include YouTube, which has different licensing restrictions.
8. Have the parts of the church that we will be using cleaned by a professional cleaning service every week.
9. Begin initially with one Sunday service at 9:00 a.m.
10. Ask members of the congregation to sign up indicating they will attend a Sunday service.
11. Limit the number of people attending in-person church to 50.

12. Expect that changes at a moment's notice will be necessary. We will expect having to move to not having in-person services if events and conditions change in the COVID-19 crisis.

We wish to be as careful as possible so that *we all stay safe*.

After the conditions established by the Linn County Health Department have been met, Stephanie Kubik, Vice President and COVID-19 resource person and Christy Pratt, Parish Nurse, will recommend that the Executive Committee and full church Council will select the date when the church doors will be open for Gathering Again.

Note: As of June 10, the Linn County Health Department conditions have been met, although this may all change as time goes on.

PHASE THREE

If all goes well in Phase 2, we will add a second service in Phase Three.

WHAT ARE OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR WHEN WE GATHER TOGETHER IN PERSON?

As stated, we wish to make our services absolutely as safe as possible. Please do not be offended by the following requirements, as they are for the safety of all. *Because there are several additional steps to complete, entrance into church will be slower.* Here is what you can expect in our church as we begin to Gather Together:

- Christy, our Parish Nurse, will warmly greet you at the door to ask a few important questions. She will take your temperature and provide people over the age of two with a mask if they don't have one. She will also direct you to the hand sanitizer for your use as you enter. She will record your name, in case we will need to do contact tracing.
- All people will wear masks throughout the service.
- There will be one entrance to and one exit from the church building, which will be marked.
- We will have one-way entrance and exit paths into the sanctuary. Individuals or family groups will maintain 6-foot apart intervals.
- We will have signs posted clearly indicating what people should do.
- There will be hand sanitizer at the exit for your use as you walk out the door.
- A nursery for small children will not be available.
- Every other pew will be closed off.
- Each available pew will allow for a family to sit together or for individuals to sit at least 6 feet away.
- An usher will assist people to fill in the pews from front to back. At the end of the service an usher will assist people to exit the sanctuary from the back to the front.
- Please pick up a hymnal as you enter the sanctuary. Return the hymnal to the cart as you leave.
- We will not yet have congregational singing or reciting prayers, including the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

- We will be using Service of the Word without Holy Communion for the foreseeable future.
- We will use only the East bathroom (the “old” bathroom). We will restrict bathroom use to one person at a time or to a parent with a child. A Bathroom Host will help people keep to this limit.
- The water fountain will be turned off.
- We will not pass the offering plate. However, an offering plate will be available for envelope drop-off OR you can continue to mail in your offering.
- We will refrain from handshakes for passing the peace. We suggest a friendly wave to others.
- We will not have a Fellowship time yet before or after the service. This means there won't be cookies available or groups congregating in the narthex. People also will need to maintain physical distance in the parking lot.
- Please respect the barriers that are set up to close off the parts of the building not in use at this time.

THANK YOU, LEADERS – AND THANKS TO ALL FOR THEIR PATIENCE

Once again, a BIG THANK you to all who have worked so hard over the past weeks who have provided leadership in the midst of most trying times. And we look forward to your continued patience as we move through the slow process of our next steps for modified in-person worship.

Pastor John
 Pastor Dennis
 Danny Stone
 Mike Dautremont, Director of Facilities
 Christy Pratt, Parish Nurse

Deb Aldrich, Director of Worship
 Executive Committee: Mick Vana,
 Stephanie Kubik, Becky
 Kelsey, Deb Bell Geiser