

May 3, 2021



Hello St. Luke Lutheran,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

With God's help, a measured pace and a variety of faithful adjustments we've managed and we've persevered as a church throughout this last year of the Covid pandemic. From our last indoor worship service on March 9th, 2020, we've continued in worship; first online during the lockdown to then gathering outdoors for worship since August, 2020 as well as online and over Facebook live. Through these many adjustments we've focused on the safety and wellbeing of one another in our community of faith. To date we've gratefully not had a single verified Covid transmission through any activity at church and nor have we had any Covid deaths. This is something to celebrate in thanksgiving and to continue to maintain through our careful progress both now and into the future.

Covid vaccinations are now spreading throughout our community. As of May 3, 2021, 29.0% of adults in Alexander county have received at least one Covid vaccination dose and 25.2% are now fully vaccinated. The vaccination rates are yet higher among our county's population over age 65. In addition, there are likely some upcoming adjustments in our state regarding the Covid protocols anticipated in the coming months.

With a continued cautious and measured approach, the church council has developed a path toward reopening worship indoors in the church sanctuary. This letter comes to you to share the details of this plan and to invite you and your family to consider your most faithful involvement in worship in the time upcoming.

First, beginning **Sunday, May 16th, 2021**, two separate in-person worship services will be offered each Sunday morning at St. Luke. An indoor worship service will be held at 10:30am in the church sanctuary. A separate outdoor worship service will continue to be offered in the morning at a separate time best suited to the weather for each Sunday morning.

Worship Outside Information:

The protocols and setup of the outdoor worship service will continue unchanged from our current setup. Outdoor seating will be available to all and the service will be FM broadcast to those wishing to worship within their vehicles. This service will also continue to be shared online, just as has been our current practice. The time for worship outdoors will continue to be determined by the best weather opportunity and shared with you via the church phone tree by 7:30pm on the Saturday evening prior to each Sunday morning. Communion will continue to be shared on the first Sunday of each month.

Worship Indoors Information:

For the safety and wellbeing of all gathered, the following criteria have been developed by the church council for worship indoors in the sanctuary beginning Sunday, May 16th:

- Worship indoors will be at 10:30am in the sanctuary.
- Following state and local guidance, worshippers are asked to:
 - Wear a facemask while indoors which covers their nose and mouth.
 - Social distance from those not in their immediate family. Every other pew will be roped off to assist with proper distancing.
- To limit exposure the service will be limited in duration with a focus on God's presence through prayer, the scriptures, preaching and the proclamation of faith.
- To assist with social distancing and sanitation there will not be the passing of the peace. The offering plate will be placed in an accessible location within the sanctuary rather than being passed among those gathered.
- At the conclusion of worship, worshippers will be dismissed to exit the sanctuary and invited to then share in any desired fellowship outside the building.
- For the time being, communion will not be shared at the indoor worship service.
- Per CDC direction and due to the heightened spread of aerosols, performed music will be shared in worship but worshippers are asked to refrain from any singing.

The church council will be engaging in continued discussion about the protocols for worship at St. Luke, both indoors and outdoors. You are encouraged to determine which worship opportunity might most invite your greatest comfort, safety, wellbeing and involvement. Please prayerfully consider how God is calling you into worship within this new step forward for our church.

Sunday School:

Additionally, the church council has set forth that Adult Sunday School classes may resume gathering indoors beginning Sunday, May 16th, 2021. For the safety and well being of all involved, adult class members are asked to follow the same protocols as shared above for indoor worship. Sunday School for children and youth will not yet be offered, but will be considered in the near future in collaboration with parents, teachers and the ongoing guidance given for childrens and youth activities.

A Final Word:

Thank you for taking time to familiarize yourself with this information and you are invited to reach out to the church office or any council member with any questions you may have. While there will likely be additional adjustments made as time goes by, this step gives us a good direction for moving our church forward.

In Christ,

The St. Luke Lutheran Church Council