



Planning for Indoor Worship at St. Luke Lutheran October 26, 2020

As we continue to make measured adjustments as a church during this time of Covid-19, we will eventually be considering opening worship indoors at St. Luke. **Outdoor worship is by far our safest method of gathering for worship and we will strive to meet outdoors until such time as we are unable.** This said, as the weather becomes less conducive for outdoor worship, great thought has been put into how we might gather most safely for worship indoors when that time comes. While it cannot 100% be guaranteed that Covid-19 cannot be transmitted while in worship (indoors or outdoors - or for that matter in any other reality of life), this plan has been developed to minimize risks and builds on the latest health and safety guidance of our time. The steps shared below are designed to maintain the safety and well being of all involved in worship and to create the safest possible environment to worship indoors together.

Our location for indoor worship at St. Luke will be in the church gymnasium.

The church gym is by far our largest indoor space and our most versatile. The tall ceilings and wide expanse permits us to best maximize proper social distancing. Seating will be carefully arranged in advance, accurately spaced, and will utilize the entirety of the gym space. When you arrive, and if needed for your immediate household, please add from the extra available stacks of chairs at the side of the church rather than rearranging any seating. It will be fine to leave unused any seating not needed in your area.

The service will continue to be a shorter and simpler version of our typical worship service, with changes being made based on proper Covid-19 adjustments. Our worship focus will be in the biblical word, preaching and prayer. We will continue, in accordance with proper Covid policy, to reduce the amount of responsive language (liturgy) that is shared and we will continue to suspend all singing. Singing greatly increases the volume of air we breathe in and out and the prevailing guidance is for churches to refrain from singing at this time. Our plan going forward during Covid is to continue to offer communion, through individual wafer and cup, on the 1st Sunday of each month.

Caring for One Another: We continue to be committed to our caring for one another as a top priority. This will first mean that we cannot shake hands or share in hugs or gather closer than 6 feet apart with anyone not in our immediate household. To minimize and manage risk as we move to indoor worship, masks will be required to be worn over the nose and mouth by all people and at all times while indoors (the only exception will be when the pastor, vicar or other worship leader is speaking). Seating will be pre-arranged throughout the gym space so that a minimum of 6 feet of spacing is maintained between all participants not living in the same household. This is critical, as doing so within our confined indoor space will greatly minimize the spread of airborne aerosol and insure a lower risk Covid environment for worship.

Faithful action by all: There is no doubt that the adjustments set forth for indoor worship will continue the necessary theme of change for our church while we traverse this time of Covid. While change itself is not always easy, these adjustments are set forth to create the safest atmosphere for us to gather in worship together and to earnestly care for one another. Our adherence to these adjustments will speak to our devotion to one another and our active and faithful concern for the health and well-being of each person in our church family.

When we do begin to worship indoors, the worship time will be at 10:00am on Sundays. As additional cleaning measures are being implemented during this time of Covid, particularly after the conclusion of worship, this worship timing will best enable this important and intentional care.

Additional Important Notes:

Worship online and through our sermon phone line service will continue. While there will continue to be a slight delay as to when worship will be posted online and on the phone line on Sundays, these worship offerings will continue. The sermon phone line number is (828) 392-7246. The sermon online link can be found on the church's website at www.stluketaylorville.org (via the "Worship Online" link) and on the church's Facebook group page.

Second (and this is still so unusual but important to say), in-person worship at church may not be for everyone right now. While we so relish the opportunity to be together at church, and it's been so difficult to have been apart for so long, there are some who may not feel comfortable participating in in-person worship at this time and in our current environment. I would like to encourage you, if you have reason for reservation, to be comfortable in not participating in in-person worship at church until the time you believe you can comfortably do so. This includes those with health concerns, pre-existing health complications and those who just don't feel ready or safe to gather among an assembled group. I want everyone to know that caring for your health and safety is our great priority and please make the proper decision for you - with the full blessing and understanding of all across our church community. If you should decide to refrain from in-person worship at this time, please continue regularly participating with the church in worship virtually every Sunday.

Third: If there should be a positive case of Covid among our church by someone in recent attendance, in-person indoor worship will be postponed for a period of at least two weeks. This is in keeping with Synod, State and CDC guidelines for Covid practice and care.

Finally: If there should be a rapid uptick of Covid-19 cases in our community, we may cancel in-person worship on the affected Sunday(s) as a precautionary safety measure. Should this occur, we will move as a congregation toward virtual worship (online and over the phone) on those Sundays.

A final word:

As is the common call of our time, please do refrain from attending worship in-person on any Sunday if you should feel sick, have been exposed to Covid in the last 14 days or are awaiting results from a Covid test. Thank you for taking time to familiarize yourself with this plan and for your dedication toward caring for the health and well-being of everyone in our church in this important time. Please feel welcome to reach out to Pastor Andrew if you should have any questions about this plan and what a joy it will be to be able to continue to worship together at church indoors!