

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NIV)

Dear members of First Lutheran,

Many of us long to return to our physical church home and once again gather together to love and worship God in the same place. The Church Council understands and also feels that need. But we believe, first and foremost, that any plan must follow Jesus's directive to not only love God but to love one another. And so our plans are based not just on the need to keep ourselves healthy and safe, but on the need for us as individuals to do all we can to keep our neighbor and community healthy and safe.

For the time being, we will offer the following worship opportunities: at **10:00 a.m.** in our church parking lot and online every other week, with an online only service in the intervening week. The parking lot/outdoor worship will be broadcast through a FM transmitter to your car radio. This will be our first step in our journey as we learn how to gather safely in the midst of a global pandemic.

It is important that when we eventually gather in-person, we recognize that this worship service will look different so we may keep our community healthy and safe. The service will be shorter than normal (approx. 30 minutes) There will be no congregational responses and no congregational singing for the time being.

By coming to in-person worship, you are entering into a covenant with your First Lutheran family. You are promising you do not have these COVID-19 symptoms:

- Fever or chills,
- New Cough,
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
- Fatigue,
- New Muscle or body aches,
- New Headache,
- New loss of taste or smell,
- New Sore throat,
- Congestion or runny nose,
- Nausea or vomiting,
- Diarrhea

Additionally, we recommend that you follow current Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and CDC guidelines and general best practices:

- Stay at home and participate in online worship
 - if you or a member of your household is not feeling well
 - if you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days
 - if you have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 10 days or are still in isolation
 - if you are in the high risk populations as defined by the CDC--65 or older and people who have underlying health conditions such as chronic lung disease, moderate to severe

asthma, serious heart conditions, immunocompromised, severe obesity, diabetes, undergoing dialysis or liver disease. (Further information can be found at www.cdc.gov)

- Ride in a vehicle only with people who reside in your household
- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth. We ask that you supply your own mask, however we will have a limited supply of masks available.
- Practice safe physical-distancing at all times (6 to 10 feet from those who do not live in your house) and use non-contact greetings.
- Proper hand hygiene (warm water and soap or hand sanitizer)
- If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19 after attending worship, please let the local public health agency know that you were recently at a worship service at First Lutheran. We will work in conjunction with local public health officials to determine anybody else who may have been exposed while attending the worship service and follow all recommended guidelines provided to us at that time. (Otter Tail County Public Health--218-998-8320)

All individuals attending worship will have the same expectations: free of COVID-19 and symptoms, clean hands, and mask-wearing and physical distancing at all times. The health expectations for adults are the same for our children within the recommended age range (see below). We understand that restrictions can be challenging for young children. It is for the health of all people we ask all of us to abide by the recommended guidelines.

Per the CDC guidelines, there are exceptions regarding wearing a mask for children under the age of two, anyone who has a medical condition that restricts breathing, and anyone who is unable to remove the face mask without assistance.

Please note: We have been in contact with our insurance company and they advise us it is necessary to follow all the guidelines given to us from state and federal health officials.

As you prepare to come to outdoor/parking lot worship, here are other items you need to know:

- The building will remain closed, therefore there will be no bathrooms available except in an emergency, so please plan ahead. If you have an emergency, please find an usher and they will be able to assist you in getting into the building.
- At the end of the worship service, we ask you to follow the directions to leave the parking lot without socializing, so that we may all exit in an orderly and timely fashion.
- Please enter the church parking lot from Olaf Ave. Ushers will have one-time use bulletins, communion elements and masks (if you need one) for you as you enter the parking lot. Please proceed to the south parking lot where another usher will direct you to your parking spot.
- In our parking lot, we will have parking areas designated for you.
- In the event of inclement weather, we will cancel outdoor/parking lot worship. We will notify you of this via Facebook and email.
- We encourage you to continue practicing generosity and give your offerings using electronic giving or by mailing your offerings to the church. If you would like to bring your offering with you, we will have a drop off point as you leave the parking lot through the designated exit in the north parking lot (exit on to W. Holdt St.). Thank you for the support for our important ministry as a congregation.

All recommendations will be evaluated and changed in accordance with the guidelines from the MDH and the CDC as we continue to monitor the current situation and make decisions based on faith, facts, and love.

If you would like to volunteer to help with set up, clean up, sound/video tech or ushering, please contact the church office.

We look forward to these opportunities for worship!

In Christ,

First Lutheran Church Council, SMART Team, and Pr. Bradley Skogen