

5/1/20

Dear Members of Zion,

We hope and pray that you and yours are doing well in this time of caution and uncertainty.

Following Governor Ricketts and Health Department Guidelines we will be able to resume worship services on Monday, May 4th at 7:00 PM.

In the weeks that follow we will resume our regularly scheduled services at 8 and 10 am on Sundays and at 7 pm on Mondays. We will also be offering a “Senior’s Only” service on Wednesdays at 10:30 am, beginning May 13th.

First and foremost, we want to emphasize to everyone, especially those with preexisting health conditions, those who are elderly and anyone who does not feel safe venturing out among people. Also if you live with someone who has a preexisting health condition or is elderly and is concerned about their safety. Please stay home. Services will continue to be offered on YouTube and DVD upon request.

For those individuals, couples, and families, who wish to attend worship services, Churches throughout Nebraska have been provided with the following guidelines which will need to be followed for the foreseeable future.

- 1) We must continue to practice social distancing. This means individuals attending church must be seated at least 6 feet from anyone else.
 - a) For this reason, we will only be able to use every third pew for seating. Blue painters tape will designate which pews which are closed to maintain a 6 ft distance between worshippers.
 - b) Doing the math, that leaves only 10 pews on each side of the church which we can use. This limits us to somewhere between 120 and 140 worshipers per service. We hope that with two services on Sunday and one service on Monday and a “Senior Service” on Wednesdays (see below), there will be an opportunity for everyone to attend services each week.
 - c) Couples and families can sit together but must be separated from other individuals and families by a minimum of 6 feet. Please keep small children close to you at all times.
 - d) More than one individual, couple, or family can sit in the same pew as long as each individual, couple, or family is six feet apart.
 - e) To make sure there is room for everyone, please make an effort to sit closer to the front of the church. Ushers and Elders will also work to help everyone find a seat.

- 2) Once again, those 65 and older and those with preexisting conditions are encouraged to continue to stay home rather than have contact with the general population. **If you do not feel safe venturing out or if you feel ill, please stay home.**

If you are a healthy senior who is determined to go to church, we will be offering a weekly **“Seniors Only Worship Service”** on Wednesdays beginning May 13th. It will be held at 10:30 AM each Wednesday until the pandemic is over. **This service is intended for our members who are 65 and over.** As with our other services, we must practice social distancing and sit at least six feet apart. Of course, couples and members of the same family may sit together.

- 3) We have been instructed that all hymnals and Bibles must be removed from the pews. For this reason, liturgy, hymns, and songs will be projected on our screen system. Hymnals and Bibles will be returned to the church pews after the pandemic is over.
- 4) We cannot pass the basket for the offering, Instead, there will be an offering basket/box in the Narthex.
- 5) Since we must maintain social distancing, Holy Communion will follow a **“Continuous Flow”** pattern. We are still the process of developing the best procedure for our church. This will be explained in further detail when communion is celebrated.
- 6) When the service is over, we are asking everyone to remain seated. For now, we will return to the traditional custom of dismissing by rows. As you walk out of the church, please remember social distancing both in the Narthex and outside if you wish to visit.
- 7) Please consider bringing your hand sanitizer and using it before you enter the church and after you leave. There are hand sanitizer dispensers in the Narthex of the church for this purpose. We will make hand sanitizer available as long as possible, but refills are now on backorder.
- 8) The CDC recommends wearing a mask anytime you are out in public. If you wish to wear a mask to Church you are certainly welcome to do so. However, no policy says you must wear a mask when you come to worship.
- 9) We are also asking worshipers to consider donating a container of antiseptic wipes which we can use to wipe down surfaces after each service. If you would like to help with this task, after service, please speak to the Elder on duty, Pastor or Vicar.

If circumstances change and we are ordered to discontinue services due to community spread of the virus, we will cease services immediately. At this point, by following the above-listed guidelines we will be able to resume services according to state law.

It is our hope and prayer that these guidelines will not become a long-standing policy. Neither do we want to provide an atmosphere in our church where “following the new rules” becomes a source of contention for anyone.

Instead let's work together to follow these precautions to help prevent the possible spread of the virus, while at the same time worshipping faithfully as the family of God remember the words of the Psalmist:

I was glad when they said unto me,

let us go to the House of the Lord. (Psalm 122:1)

God's richest blessings to you and yours. We look forward to seeing you in worship when you and yours feel safe attending.