

Trinity Lutheran Church
Stonington, Michigan
Plan for Returning to In-Person (Outdoor) Worship
August 3, 2020

As Trinity Lutheran Church begins to resume activities by implementing outdoor worship during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, please know that we do so through a careful process of discussion and discernment, with an abundance of caution and concern for those who are most high-risk, upon consideration of the best scientific knowledge at our disposal, in the spirit of constant prayer, and with full trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

COVID-19 and Safety Precautions

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a newly discovered (novel) coronavirus called SARS-COV-2 that is currently spreading across the globe. In COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease. The '19' is for its origins in the year 2019. COVID-19 has led to numerous deaths. Those who are ill may have severe symptoms, mild symptoms, or even no symptoms and spread the virus.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms may include: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

According to the CDC, the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). COVID-19 seems to be spreading easily and sustainably in the community ("community spread") in many affected geographic areas. Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

All high-risk individuals are recommended to continue to shelter in place. High-risk individuals are defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as

- People 65 years and older.
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility

- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including: people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher), people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease.

PPE is an acronym referring to personal protective equipment. According to the CDC, PPE can include, but is not limited to: masks, gloves, protective eyewear, respirators, gowns, etc. For a full list please see the CDC's website.

Hand Hygiene: the CDC recommends using hand sanitizer with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol. Hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

The church will have hand sanitizer readily available to all attending worship.

Physical Distancing (also often referred to as social distancing): the CDC defines physical distancing as keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice physical distancing please stay at least six feet (about two arms' length) from other people, do not gather in groups, stay out of crowded places, and avoid mass gatherings (unless cleared to do so by State of Michigan Executive Orders).

Gathering Together for Worship

Physical Building and Grounds

The parking lot of the church will be the designated physical space for worship until further notice. In the event of inclement weather, the Church Council President will decide whether or not to cancel worship by 7:30am, and implement the calling tree.

Church Council Members will be responsible for marking out the required six foot distance for each parishioner on the parking lot surface with sidewalk chalk.

The altar and lectern will be set up on the north side of the church building facing north. The congregation will be seated in the parking lot facing south.

There will be a designated area where church members can park and remain in their vehicles for the worship service if they choose to do so.

Usher Responsibilities:

- Ushers are responsible to assist with parking and seating.
- Ushers will take attendance and keep a record of who is attending each service (for purposes of contact tracing should a member test positive for COVID-19).
- Ushers will ensure that everyone is wearing a face covering. If needed, the usher will provide a face covering to individuals who do not have one.
- Ushers are responsible to enforce social distancing and safe practices as much as possible.
- If an individual refuses to follow the guidelines and rules for worship, the usher will ask them to leave.
- If ushers are not comfortable assuming any of the above responsibilities, a church council member will step in and perform the duty.

Altar Guild Responsibilities

- The Altar Guild will be responsible for setting up the table for bulletins, hand sanitizer, and offering box each Sunday. The round table normally located in the hallway behind the door near the office (by the light switches) will be used as the outdoor table.
- The Altar Guild will also be responsible for taking the table down, sanitizing it, and placing it in the storage shed near the church.

Monitoring and Preparing

In the event that a congregant becomes sick during worship, he or she will be separated from the rest of the congregation in a designated area.

Should an individual who attended worship be diagnosed with COVID-19, this needs to be reported to the pastor and the church council president. The church council president or pastor will notify local health officials, and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.

The church council president and/or pastor will advise those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

The church council president and/or pastor will advise congregants with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to worship until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

The Future

This document will remain in effect until further notice, but also remain fluid in these ever-changing and uncertain times.

Should our community experience a steady increase in the numbers of COVID-19 cases, the church council will meet to discuss suspending outdoor worship until the numbers flatten or reduce.

Trinity Lutheran Church cares deeply about its members, and will follow all legally binding orders, recommendations from health officials, recommendations from the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Furthermore, Trinity Lutheran Church will follow State and Federal guidelines for re-opening, as well as requirements and recommendations from our insurance agent.