

To the faithful,

We are longing to return to our church building, to in-person worship, and to in-person fellowship. Just because we can get back together, are we really ready? The apostle Paul writes to the new Christians in Corinth:

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of others. (I Corinthians 10:23-24)

Our clarion call to love and serve our neighbors remains the same, and our challenge is to find ways to be the church without placing our neighbors at risk, especially those most vulnerable.

This COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to shift from a focus on weekly Sunday worship to incarnational ministry. We are a deployed church in our communities; we are doing the work of Jesus; we are embodying God’s love. As one of the latest “pop” phrases puts it: “Jesus has left the building.” The church, your church, is *Making the Love of Christ Known*, in new and impactful ways-outside the walls of the church building.

Concerning the scientific and public health community, we need to recognize that we are still learning a great deal about this virus, how it spreads, and how to manage the risks of engaging in normal social interactions. One thing we know for sure is that we are going to have to learn to live with this virus for months or years.

These are challenging and uncertain times, and the decisions we make today may need to evolve as we learn more about this virus and its impact on our communities. I pray that, through it all, we will continue to be grounded in our faith, our concern for the most vulnerable members of our society, and our love for one another.

Your servant,

Pastor Jeffery Gramza

Guidelines for a loving return to in-person worship

May 31 – Pentecost

- 2 On-line worship services: 9:15 Contemporary, 10:45 Traditional
- Communion at home (as we did on Easter)

June 7 – First Sunday of In-Person Worship

For the month of June:

- These safety measures are built around our love for you, our neighbors, and the most vulnerable among us.
- If you have any fever or other symptoms of illness, you must stay home.
- Masks will be worn by people over 2 years old, into and out of worship.
 - Masks may be removed once the worshiper seated.
- No Holy Communion (month of June)
- Pews and chairs will be prepared for physical distancing.
- Singing **will** be a part of worship, **but**, we will have less singing, and we will sing from a seated position.
- Bulletins will be available, but will not be handled by ushers.
- Doors will be propped open as possible.
- Worship will be shorter in duration.
- Offerings will be collected in boxes or baskets at doorways before and after worship.
- No coffee/donuts
- Worship spaces and restrooms will be cleaned/sanitized before and after worship.
- No Nursery or Kid's Praise
- If you are uncomfortable with any of the safety measures for June, please continue to worship on-line.

July 5 – Begin easing some safety measures.

- This is wholly dependent on the state of the pandemic at that time.
- In-person Holy Communion will be celebrated July 5th

Gathering for Worship

- Maintain a minimum 6' distance in all directions between individuals or family units of the same households at all times.
- We must consider ways to cordon off pews, move chairs, etc., for safe distancing.
- Greeters and ushers will have different roles.
 - They will not shake hands or hand out bulletins.

- They will lead by example: good hygiene, wearing a face mask, physical distancing, etc.

Worship

- Pastors, readers, assisting ministers, and others will not share common books or binders, but rather, read from their own paper or digital device.
- Speakers and preachers may remove their face covering while speaking only if they are 10 feet or more from others.
- The Welcome/Sharing of Peace will be omitted to help worshipers abstain from touching/hugging.
- Offering plates will not be passed among the congregation. Instead, we will place receptacles for people to drop offerings in as they enter and exit.
 - We continue to encourage electronic giving.
- Hymnals and Bibles books will not be available to worshippers unless they bring their own and take them back home with them.
- No Nursery or Kid's Praise

Holy Communion (beginning in July)

- Communion will be celebrated less frequently.
- Altar Guild will wash hands and don a mask before preparing the communion elements.
- Communion elements (bread and wine) will remain covered until distribution.
- Pastor will consume, not distribute, the wafer used in the Eucharistic prayer.
- Pastor will don a mask and sanitize his hands prior to distribution.
- Communion Assistants will put on masks and sanitize their hands after receiving communion and before distributing communion.
- Only one communion line at a time.
- We ask communicants to maintain safe distances while in line.
- Wine will be distributed in our traditional small cups.
 - Communion assistants will not touch the cups.
 - Cups will be spaced out in the trays to help communicants not touch other cups.

Dismissal

- Worshippers may drop off their tithes/offerings on the way out.
- Physical distance must be maintained as people leave the worship space and in the narthex.
- Face coverings should be worn until people have left the building or finished parking lot conversations (at a distance).

- Pastors and other worship leaders will not shake hands or touch folks in any way after worship. Greetings and conversations should be done at the appropriate 6' distance.
- There will be no sharing of food, including coffee hours, potlucks, or other typical forms of food-based fellowship before or after worship. This one may be most difficult sacrifices for Lutherans!

Pastor

- Will wear a mask when not leading worship.
- Will not wear a face mask when leading worship and preaching, maintaining a safe distance of 10 feet.
- Will attempt to communicate and mingle with people for a short time before and after worship, maintaining a safe distance of 6 feet.
- Will wash hands before Holy Communion.
- Will use hand sanitizer before distributing the Host (bread).