



Lutheran Church of the
GOOD SHEPHERD
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Partners in Ministry,

At our April Leadership Team meeting plans were discussed regarding how best to safely return to in-person worship. Much like any conversations around the topic of COVID, the opinions were varied, and feelings were passionate. The dialogue that we had as a Leadership Team was important, healthy, and made clear that we had a wide array of opinions represented. Most importantly, all were heard and respected. This is the model that we urge you, people of Good Shepherd, to follow as we inch closer and closer to something resembling normal. Please note that all of this could change at the drop of a hat over the course of the next month.

Please continue to wear masks. Please continue to follow local guidelines. Please continue to do your part.

What follows is a summary of what the conversations have been, what has been behind our decisions to this point, and what informed our decisions moving forward.

Phased Approach to in-person worship at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

Overarching Commitment: The continued care, compassion, and respect for all of God's children amid a Global Pandemic.

- In stating goals and reasoning, this commitment is implied. It is #1 in all things stated hereafter. We are committed to the continued care of all of God's people, we believe that how we proceed directly impacts how it is that we care for God's people, and what we believe our expression of "church" to be. All that we do will be done in the safest way possible.

Background of the decision making to this point, and going forward:

- As a Leadership Team, we have felt that having folks sign up, register, spread way out, while telling vulnerable demographics to not attend, is not an expression of church that we subscribe to. The thought of turning away a visitor because they didn't sign up, or we were at capacity, wasn't something that we were going to do. Anytime church is exclusive, it isn't church.
- With the vaccine being made available to anyone over the age of 16, we believe that giving folks that want to be vaccinated the time to do that is the proper thing to do, and many will have had that opportunity by the month of May.
- We have operated with upmost respect for the many varied viewpoints in regard to how to operate in a time of pandemic. Respect and care for others is going to continue to be central to how we operate as a faith community.
- The plans laid out will involve signing up, but steps will be taken to avoid turning away guests.

Long term goal: Return to as close to what normal Sunday mornings used to be by the beginning of the next program year (September)

- As of now, we would not be able to have fellowship time and would strongly discourage lingering conversations indoors, shaking hands, hugging, communal speaking and signing, etc.
- We hope that by September we will be closer to being able to safely do some of those things.

Phased approach to offering in-person worship opportunities:

- **Monthly Milestone Celebrations** (outdoor when possible)
 - o Wednesday, April 21 – Confirmation service for our 9th graders
 - Weather permitting – whole congregation invited and will happen outdoors.
 - If there is bad weather the service will be inside with Confirmation families only.
 - o May 16 – Celebration of 66th Anniversary
 - o June – New Members
 - o July – Faith Formation Summer Ministry Celebration
 - o August – First Communion
- **May**
 - o Two services on Sundays – 9 and 10:30 - safety protocols in place and made abundantly clear.
 - o The month of May is going to be a test run for how to best operate going forward
- **June – July – August**
 - o Midweek Worship at the Senior Apartments will have resumed and will continue.
 - o Midweek midday worship in the Sanctuary and outdoors in the evening
 - Many folks are away on the weekend and our attendance is heavily impacted. This could be an opportunity that works better with summer schedules.
 - Both services could include a bring your own meal and spaced-out meal fellowship.
 - o Sunday Worship – Praise in the Park at Phoenix Park – 10 am
 - This is a collaborative effort of Good Shepherd, Spirit, Immanuel, Trinity, and some others. The aim of this service is to be a presence in downtown EC on Sunday mornings. This is an expression of church that we want to be a part of and have and have been planning for some time.
- **Funerals** – In-person with a capacity of 100 people spaced out, no meal, and livestreaming available.

What you can expect when you return to in-person worship

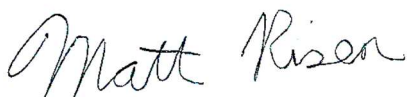
- All who are present will be required to wear a mask – The simplest form of caring for our neighbors.
- Communal singing and speaking will be minimal – music will be solos or small ensembles.
- Chairs will be spaced out in the sanctuary.
- You will be asked to only be seated with family or those whom you arrive with.
- You will be ushered out of worship and asked to not linger in the building.
- Fellowship time will not be able to happen in the building but can happen outside if you wish.

We know there are many varied opinions on the topic of the COVID pandemic. We are going to be following the guidelines of two things:

- 1) Jesus – to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind and love our neighbor as ourselves.
- 2) The Experts – we will adhere to what the CDC and local agencies recommend for indoor gathering.

We want to thank all of you for your continued commitment to your church and to your neighbor. A year ago we (society as a whole) said that we will get through this together, and that remains ever so true today as we eagerly look towards physically coming back together as a worshipping community – the Body of Christ.

Yours in Christ,



Matt Risen
Congregation President



Lacy Sahr
Congregation Vice President



Pastor Josh Toufar