

# **Faith Lutheran Church**

## **COVID-19 Risk-Reduction Plan**

**June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### **Plans to re-open our church for worship on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

The following document describes why and how we will open our church buildings for worship with the Pastors and members together. Please read it carefully, and call the church office if you have any questions.

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It is essential to the spiritual health of Christians that we gather together for divine worship. We must also protect the physical health and safety of the members of Faith and Grace Lutheran Churches by taking measures to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

This is a point of intersection between the Third and Fifth Commandments. The Third Commandment (“Remember the Sabbath day”) deals with the necessity of worship, while the Fifth Commandment (“You shall not murder”) forbids us from causing our neighbour any bodily harm and requires us to help and befriend them in every need (see Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms for further explanation). The Third and Fifth Commandments are not in conflict with each other, but we must use wisdom in discerning the best way to keep both commandments.

We encourage those parishioners with risk factors for the coronavirus-caused COVID-19 to avoid physical interaction with others to protect their health. We will continue to live-stream our services for those who choose not to attend services in-person. We strongly suggest that people with pulmonary conditions, compromised immune systems, or those blessed with advanced age not join us on-site while the coronavirus is present in the community. We will make every

effort to encourage their spiritual health while safeguarding their physical wellbeing.

It is right and biblical to protect our own health. When God breathed the breath of life into Adam (Gen. 2:7), He intended that life to stay there. Life is good. Furthermore, our bodies are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). They belong to God, and we are merely stewards of them. We have the responsibility of protecting our bodies and using them for the benefit of our neighbors. We do not have the right to risk our lives irresponsibly, because we are not the owners of our lives; God is. To risk your life is to risk something that you do not own. Yes, on the one hand, Christians should not fear death. And yet, on the other hand, we must not test God. The devil used Psalm 91:11-12 to tempt Jesus to throw himself off the temple (**“He will command his angels concerning you ... On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”**). Jesus didn’t go for it. He said, **“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test”** (Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:5-7). We must not test God either. It is wrong to fear death, but it is also right to avoid it. We also recognize that everyone’s health situation is different. Consult your doctor and your pastors for more specific advice.

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What follows are the procedures agreed upon by Church Council and the Boards of Elders and Trustees for the re-opening of Faith Lutheran Church. These procedures are based upon the Stage 2 document of regulations for “COVID-19: Public Health Guidance for Places of Worship” by the Middlesex-London Health Unit (June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

Since COVID-19 is evolving rapidly, this guidance is subject to change. We will make every effort to remain current and inform you of changes.

**As stated above, the re-opening for Sunday Services at Faith will be July 5<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. Praise the Lord!**

Please note that in accordance with the Middlesex-London health regulations, at this time **all places of worship** are allowed **UP TO 30% CAPACITY** for worship services. That means **WE CANNOT EXCEED 70 WORSHIPPERS** in the sanctuary.

Since the possibility exists that we could exceed the 30% capacity for Sunday worship, I would ask **the Elders to contact the families on their lists** and ask if those families would consider attending the Wednesday evening services. They would note those who are willing to do so and then inform Pastor Scholz. Pastor Scholz would need to know **WHO** and **HOW MANY** in the families to expect for the services. This would help alleviate some concerns of exceeding the capacity.

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## **Sunday Morning Arrival of Members and Guests:**

Please plan on arriving early (9:30 am recommended) as it will take a little time to have everyone seated. Volunteers are asked to be present by 9 am for last minute instruction.

After you enter the lot, please **ENTER** the church building through the north-west entrance **ONLY!** The door will be clearly marked. All other entrances will not be open. **Note:** Those members or visitors who require a ‘barrier free’ access will be allowed to use the south-east entrance.

You will be greeted by our “welcome volunteers” as you enter. A brief screening process will follow. You will be asked the following:

- *Have you been in contact recently with a confirmed case of COVID-19 virus in the last 14 days?*
- *Have you been experiencing any symptoms such as a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing?*
- *Have you been instructed by public health to self-isolate due to travel or contact history?*

If you answer “Yes” to any of the questions, for the health of your fellow worshippers you should **NOT** attend services at this time. Please note that these services are being live-streamed and can be watched from the security of your home.

Once it is determined that it is safe for you to enter, you will receive a little hand sanitizer from one of the team members. Your name and phone number will also be recorded at this time.

If you have brought a **non-medical face covering (mask)** with you, we **strongly encourage** you to wear as it will be a challenge to maintain safe distancing in the building (2 m or 6 feet). Disposable masks will be provided for those without one. When ready, you will be asked to proceed down the hall following the physical distancing markers on the floor.

You will head up the stairs to the sanctuary, where you will be met by **ushers**. It is very important that you **wait for an usher** before entering the sanctuary. They will seat you in the pews that are open, starting with the front right side of seating. **NB.** We will allow seating every second pew. As well, once you enter the pew, ensure that you **respect the space** of your neighbours – keep six feet apart, unless you are with your spouse or immediate family. Please remember to **minimize talking with those around you**. You will have ample time to **socialize in the parking lot** once you have exited the building.

## **Sunday Morning Worship Services:**

The services will either be printed out or taken directly from the Lutheran Service Book. The printed services will be placed at the end of the pews. **NB.** Since the coronavirus cannot exist on the surface of the Lutheran Service Book or the Holy Bible over a 48 hour period, and since we will not use the books until the Wednesday evening services, we have left the books in the pews. The “Record of Fellowship” and pencils have been removed.

**Sharing of the Peace:** We will refrain from the sharing of the peace, handshaking, and hugging at this time. As stated above, all greetings before and after the services should be done outdoors and away from the entrance and exit points to the building!

**Singing:** In accordance with the health regulations and to minimize the risk of transmitting the illness, we **strongly recommend** that singing be **replaced by humming** or by **reading the words** as the hymn is played. If you wish to sing the hymns in the service, do so while **wearing the mask**. Remember, we do this out of Christian concern and love for those around us.

**Holy Communion:** We will hold Communion services in the near future. Presently, private communion is available and encouraged by appointment with your pastors.

**Note:** The process for Holy Communion is described in detail at the end of this document.

**Wednesday Services:** Services will also be held on Wednesday evenings, beginning at 7 pm on July 8<sup>th</sup>. They will be a duplicate of the Sunday service. These services will be for **those who cannot attend the Sunday services**.

**Coffee and Fellowship:** Regrettably, coffee and refreshments following the service is suspended until a later time.

## **Sunday Morning Departure**

At the completion of the service, worshippers will once again wait for direction from the ushers. You will be asked to exit through the narthex (back right entrance) and go directly to the parking lot. Worshippers will be asked to remember to take their belongings with them, including the service forms/bulletins. Please avoid stopping in the narthex to visit as it will create a “bottle neck” and may cause confusion. Go in peace and serve the Lord!

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## **Holy Communion Distribution:**

When we are ready to resume Holy Communion in our worship services (perhaps later in July), the following “temporary” practice will be observed. It has been adopted by the Board of Elder and your pastors.

A “pilgrim-style” approach seems to be the best and safest approach at this time with physical distancing. When we return to celebrating Holy Communion together, the sacrament will be distributed and received by “intinction” in the following way:

Immediately before beginning the distribution, the pastor will use hand sanitizer. He will also wear a face covering. As the communicants come forward one by one in pilgrim-style at the direction of the usher and by observing social distancing, the pastor will stand at the foot of the chancel.

He will take the consecrated host and dip (intinct) it very slightly in the chalice of consecrated wine. (There will also be a small chalice containing a very small amount of consecrated wine and a small container with gluten-free for members who are allergic to wheat).

The “intincted” host will then be placed in the outstretched palm of the hand of the communicant (“the cradle of Jesus”) who will then receive it into his or her mouth. The pastor will say: **“The Body and Blood of Christ for you.”**

Should the pastor accidentally touch the hand of a communicant, everything will stop while he reapplies hand sanitizer. The two members receiving the gluten-free host will themselves take the host from the tray and dip it into the small chalice. Children or non-communicants may come up for a blessing, but pastor will not lay his hand upon their heads. Communicants will be asked to use hand sanitizer again immediately following their reception of Holy Communion on their way back to their seat.

\*Note concerning the choice of intincting in this manner: After considering every possible way of giving Holy Communion, this way of intinction was deemed to be the safest practice. A number of other pastors were consulted, including Pastor Bublitz, our Regional Pastor.

\*Concern with individual cups: Although the use of individual cups might seem to some to be a very sanitary option, it is not. There is a greater risk of disease transmission with individual cups.

\*Concern with the Common Cup: The Common Cup, under normal circumstances is very safe. The problem with it now is we don't fully understand Covid-19 and the way it is transmitted. Being airborne with droplets, the lack of distancing required with the Common Cup is a problem.

\*Concern with the usual way of intinction: Intinction, in which the communicant takes the consecrated host and intincts it in the chalice, is the method with the least safety. There is too much danger of fingers touching the Pastor's hand or the chalice or the consecrated wine in the chalice.

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If you have questions please contact one of the pastors through email or by phone:

Pastor Scholz [pastorjsflc@rogers.com](mailto:pastorjsflc@rogers.com) (519) 204-5854

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Go in peace. Serve the Lord!