

Our Ministry Plans & Practices in a COVID-19 World

Ascension Lutheran Church Council, Fond du Lac, WI

1. Some Opening Words

As we continue our long and unwanted journey amidst the lingering threat of COVID-19, we are confident that God will lead us through these troubled times. Your Church Council pledges to keep trying to learn and put into place the best practices recommended by leaders in science, medicine and the wider church as we move forward with “re-opening” and carrying out our mission and ministry together.

The safety, health, and welfare of our staff, members, and friends remains a top priority. It is the reason we have put together these guidelines. Even so, it is important to understand that not all risk can be eliminated. Put in a more ominous sounding way: when you enter the church building during the COVID-19 pandemic, you will be entering at your own risk.

As reflected in our wider society, there is a diversity of views about the issues before us and it is important for us to respect and care for one another even amid our differences. **The Council members pledge to be role models in following the guidelines outlined below and we are asking our staff members to do the same.** As we return to our school year schedule, we share the following operating plans and procedures...

Note: Any governmental requirements will take precedence over what is written below. Also, as stated at the end of this document, this plan will be altered as needed should circumstances change.

2. Inside the Church Building

- Hand sanitizing stations have been placed at the main entrance by the Church Office and at the Sanctuary entrance. Members, guests, and staff are asked to sanitize their hands after entering the building. Please note the Sanctuary entrance will only be open for worship services. For all other times, the main entrance will be the only unlocked door
- Staff is encouraged to frequently wash their hands, and signage demonstrating proper handwashing is posted as a reminder.
- Hand sanitizer is also available in numerous other locations throughout the building. (Members are also encouraged to bring along their own to use.)
- We will continue to encourage committee meetings to be held via conference call or video conferencing whenever possible.
- Members, guests, and staff will practice physical distancing and maintain a minimum separation of 6 feet from others to the maximum extent possible.
- Individuals may choose not to wear a mask when they are the only one in that particular room. Otherwise, per ELCA and CDC guidelines, masks will be worn. (Masks are not required for kids under age 5.)
- The cleaning crew will prioritize sanitation of door handles, frames, surfaces, etc.

Our Ministry Plans & Practices in a COVID-19 World

Ascension Lutheran Church Council, Fond du Lac, WI

- For the time being, no meals, snacks or refreshments will be served in the church--aka "Fellowship" events. (It is okay for staff to BYO food/beverage!)
- The Nursery will not be available for use at this time.
- The church building will be open to staff (paid and volunteer) during normal working hours and members who have a prearranged appointment with a staff member. (Brief stops for pick-ups or drop-offs are okay.)
- Community groups may once again be able to use certain spaces within the building provided they agree to follow the practices described in this document and do the necessary sanitizing afterwards. [The Council will develop a process to determine how these groups can request use of the building, which space(s) might be available, and how that access will be granted or denied.]
- Appropriate signage will be placed throughout the building to explain and reinforce the provisions of this plan.

3. Sanitation

- Volunteers and or Ushers will wipe down pews, door handles, flat surfaces, bathrooms and any other high touch areas after each event using virucidal wipes or other appropriate disinfectants.
- The Sanctuary and other spaces being used will be set up and marked to maintain physical distancing.
- Unneeded furnishings and items will be temporarily removed.
- Ideally, we will have 4 days between usages of the Sanctuary. Whenever possible, we will schedule the use of rooms/spaces to create unoccupied time gaps.
- Windows will be opened whenever possible to allow for fresh air to enter the occupied spaces. Fans in the HVAC system will be running as often as possible to take advantage of the iWave Air Purification system that was recently donated and installed.
- As described above, we encourage all those entering the building to use one of the hand sanitizer stations.

4. Worship Services

We are committed to providing a "live stream" worship option for those who will not be attending our "in-person" worship services.

- We are offering 3 worship options:
 - Sunday morning service #1 in the Sanctuary
 - Sunday morning service #2 in the Sanctuary
 - Participate in either service from home via livestream
- We are also exploring use of the Zone for additional worship options.
- We will have a supply of new masks to offer to those who do not have one with them.

Our Ministry Plans & Practices in a COVID-19 World

Ascension Lutheran Church Council, Fond du Lac, WI

- Attendance at each in-person service will be limited to the seating capacity required to maintain recommended physical distancing. While visitors and members who “walk in” will always be welcome, we are encouraging everyone to sign up in advance for their seating so we can make the best use of our rearranged space. (This also helps us cut down on wasted paper since we’ll have a better idea of how many bulletins to print!) Seating options for individuals and family groups will be available. (See “Worship Seating Reservation Procedure” below!)
- In addition, the following items will apply during or between worship services:
 - We have begun looking for some low-risk ways to prepare and distribute Holy Communion. Until we find one, public Communion will not be offered.
 - Until we can find a safer way to do so, our music will be limited to instrumental and pre-recorded pieces (no “live” singing or wind/brass instruments)
 - Offering baskets and friendship pads will not be distributed. There will be some “fixed” places where people can drop off their offering and worship registration.
 - We encourage everyone to bring along their Bible and a pen. Paper bulletins, prayers, and announcement sheets will be placed onto the reserved seats for each service and a link to pdf versions of the same will be emailed out in advance each week. We will continue to project the service on the screens!
 - An Usher/Greeter will be at the exterior doors 15 minutes before each service to welcome people into the building and give directions as needed. As much as possible, the inside doors will be propped open and remain open during the service.
 - Congregating inside the building for fellowship after the service will be discouraged. ***Members are encouraged to socialize outside while observing physical distancing.***
 - Bathrooms will be available immediately before, during, and after each service.
 - Baptisms can be held and will be completed in a manner that is agreed upon by the Pastor and family.
 - Weddings and funerals can be conducted with the same limitations as worship. (This includes encouraging physical distancing wherever possible and wearing masks.)

5. Worship Seating Reservation Procedure

- **Purpose** –As we continue our phased return to in-person worship, seating in the Sanctuary shall be limited to the physical distancing capacity recommended by our County Health Department.
- **Seating Chart** - A seating chart for the reconfigured Sanctuary will be posted inside the building and on the church website.
- **Seating Reservation Process** – As mentioned above in Section 4, in order to make the best use of our space limitations, we are encouraging our members and visitors to “reserve” their seats ahead of time on a weekly basis. An email to the Church Office is the preferred method, but a phone call, voicemail or reservation in person are also acceptable. When making your

Our Ministry Plans & Practices in a COVID-19 World

Ascension Lutheran Church Council, Fond du Lac, WI

reservation, please include your name, email, phone number, service time and the number of seats needed. (Preferences will be honored when possible.)

- **Reservation Window** – The reservation period for both services starts at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday and ends at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday. Seating will be assigned on a first come basis and will be administrated by our Office Manager, Sandie Berka. She will confirm receipt of the reservation and assign seating, honoring preferences whenever possible. If seating is assigned right away, her confirmation will include the seats assigned and a reminder to check the seating chart on the website for their specific location. If seats are assigned later, the worshippers can find their seats when they arrive. (See next item!) If seats are not available, members will be made aware of seating that may be available in the other Sunday service and/or be encouraged to worship via livestream.
- **Seating Chart** – After all seats have been assigned, copies of the seating chart for each service will be printed and made available outside the Sanctuary.
- **Ushers** – Ushers will be available to assist members in finding their assigned seats. They will also have a list of any unassigned seats in the Sanctuary and will assist walk-ins or visitors to these seats where appropriate.
- **Overflow** – If appropriate seating is not available in the Sanctuary for walk-ins or visitors, the ushers shall direct worshippers to overflow seating in the Zone.

6. Pastoral Care

- In-person pastoral care will be available at the discretion of the Pastor and/or institution of residence.

7. Church Ministries (Children, Youth, Adult, etc.)

- Activities are permitted outside of the church building at the discretion of staff and participant parents. Outside activities such as hiking, campfires, etc. are encouraged assuming physical distancing can be observed and there is no “buffet” sharing of food or beverages.
- Church ministries can resume classes and activities inside the building according to their team plans and following the policies described in this document.

8. Other Considerations

- If you are sick or not feeling well, **please** don't come to church. If you are observed not feeling well, you will be asked to leave.
- If you are at a higher risk from COVID-19 (due to age or an underlying medical condition) we encourage you to worship via livestream rather than in person.

Our Ministry Plans & Practices in a COVID-19 World

Ascension Lutheran Church Council, Fond du Lac, WI

9. Self-Quarantining Requirements (Updated CDC Guidelines)

- If you or someone in your home tests positive for COVID-19, please self-quarantine at home for 14-days and do not return to the church building until the quarantine period has passed or you are cleared by a medical professional.
- If you are in close contact with an individual who tests positive for COVID-19, please self-quarantine at home and do not return to the church building until the quarantine period has passed. Close contact as previously defined by the CDC is being within 6 feet for a prolonged period of time (>10 minute if they are asymptomatic).

Note: The above-described steps will be continuously evaluated as the situation evolves and may be changed as required.