

# Initial Plan for Coming Back Together - Lutheran Church of the Living Christ

Adopted by the congregational council on 05/23/20

## Introduction:

Utilizing recommendations set forth by the governor of Missouri Mike Parson, St. Louis County Executive Sam Page, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, Lutheran Church of the Living Christ adopts the following 3 phase approach as a plan to move forward during the COVID-19 pandemic. As information and situations may change rapidly during this crisis, the plan may change as needed.

Current research shows the COVID-19 virus transmits through the air and through droplets on commonly touched surfaces. The virus is emitted as an aerosol and is spread by breathing, talking, and singing. Research also indicates that peak contagiousness is strongest **before** the onset of symptoms. For these reasons, we will proceed with caution, keeping in mind the health and safety of those most vulnerable in our congregation and community.

Each phase will be evaluated by criteria in order to mitigate against resurgence and protect the most vulnerable: certain days of declining symptoms and cases, availability of testing and protective equipment. As we move to new phases, it is possible that conditions will not improve, but infections will increase again. In that case, physical distancing recommendations would need to be tightened temporarily in order to get back on track. Progress will not necessarily be linear. LCLC will be encouraging careful hygiene, following the physical distancing recommendations, encouraging people to stay at home if they have any symptoms of illness, and cooperating with contact tracers if they are diagnosed.

The following practices are currently in place:

- Online worship services only.
- Bible studies, Sunday school, small groups, etc. are meeting online or are suspended for the time being.
- Service ministries are using safety protocols (6ft distance, masks, handwashing) and only addressing essential needs.
- Minimal, drop-in staffing sufficient for essential operations (counting and deposits, mail processing, etc).

**Phase 1**-14 continuous days of declining cases will be our primary indicator for moving into Phase 1. We will also be paying attention to widespread availability of testing, contact tracing and no PPE shortages. We will remain in Phase 1 until the county guidelines adopted on May 18th are amended or replaced. Our plan is to begin reopening as follows:

- Small group gatherings, limited to 10 people or less. Masks and maintaining 6ft of distance is required.
- Weddings, Funerals as needed, following small group gathering limitations.
- No Fellowship activities, Sunday School
- Continue to hold Zoom/online worship on Sundays and Bible study on Tuesdays

- High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff or volunteers, are encouraged to continue to shelter in place.

**Phase 2**-The shift from Phase 1 to Phase 2 is based on a re-evaluation of the situation using the original criteria, which is 28 continuous days of declining cases without resurgence. We might expect several weeks of improving conditions to pass before this shift. This will require careful observance of physical/social distancing recommendations on an ongoing basis. **We will stay in Phase 1 until this occurs and St. Louis County issues new guidelines.**

- Groups larger than 10 may begin meeting again. Those gathering will continue to maintain 6ft distance and wear masks. Groups may also choose to continue to meet online.
- May begin worship services, maintain 6 feet spacing between family groups. Masks will be required. Online worship will continue to be offered. Changes to worship will include:
  - Ushers will be trained not to shake hands or give out bulletins.
  - Bulletins can be put out at 6 foot spacing before the service to encourage keeping this spacing.
  - Prop doors open before/after service so everyone doesn't have to open the doors
  - Wipe down pews/door handles with Clorox wipes after each service
  - Offering will be collected in the back of the church, will not pass the plate
  - Hand sanitizer will be available
- High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff or volunteers, are encouraged to continue to shelter in place.
- Signs will be posted with social distancing and hygiene reminders, as well as describing symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they have symptoms.
- Clean the building regularly and between user groups, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces.

**Phase 3**-42 continuous days of declining cases without resurgence. The shift from Phase 2 to Phase 3 is based on a re-evaluation of the situation using St. Louis County and Federal Guidelines. Once St. Louis County has 42 days of declining cases without resurgence. We might expect several more weeks of improving conditions to pass before this shift.

- May see relaxed guidelines when it comes to gathering for worship services – less worry about 6 foot distance between family groups, propping doors open and so forth. More specific details will come as we approach this stage.
- Fellowship activities may resume.

**Phase 4**-Sunday School to Re-start in the Fall. Labor Day is September 7<sup>th</sup>. **Therefore, the first day of Sunday School is planned for 9/13/20.**

For the time being, our facility will be closed to outside groups through the end of the year.