

# **COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for St. Michael's Lutheran Church**

**Approved by the Parish Council**

**Date: May 11, 2021**

## **Preamble**

My Command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command (John 15:12-14). This document outlines St. Michael's plans to love each other through our actions. We will love our neighbors by doing all we can to protect their health emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

## **COVID-19 Preparedness Plan**

St. Michael's is committed to providing a safe and healthy facility for our staff, members, and visitors. This plan was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure we implement strategies and procedures to protect our members and to preserve public health. The entire church will have a role in implementing this plan to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 within our facility and our community that would result in a disruption to our mission. Therefore, all persons in our facility will be expected to comply with all aspects of this plan. The church leadership and council have full support in enforcing the provisions of this policy.

St. Michael's will do its best to follow guidance developed by the state of Minnesota, available at the Stay Safe Minnesota website (<https://staysafe.mn.gov/>), and especially relevant and current executive orders regarding Faith-based Communities (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf>). We will also take into account guidance from the Minnesota South District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). This plan addresses:

1. Use of face coverings
2. Maintaining 6 feet of social distance between people
3. Hand hygiene
4. Building and facilities
5. Cleaning and disinfecting
6. Training and communication
7. Providing in-home services
8. Shared transportation
9. Shared temporary housing
10. General considerations

## **1. Use of face coverings**

Executive Order 20-81 requires all people to wear face coverings while indoors.

Signs regarding face coverings are posted at building entrances. Face masks are available at the welcome desk for those that need them. Congregants in at-risk categories are encouraged to participate in services virtually. On-line options also are available for Meetings, Bible Studies, Sunday School, Confirmation, and Youth Group. Main speakers or musicians may temporarily remove their face covering when speaking/performing. Staff working alone in their office area are allowed to remove their face covering.

## **2. Maintaining 6 feet of social distance between people/households**

For worship, there are designated signs on the floor as you walk into the worship center to remind attendees to maintain a 6 foot distance. Some pews have been marked off to allow households to sit together while maintaining a 6 foot distance from other households. We no longer have the greeting at the beginning of the service. Offering plates are not passed during the service. Communion is self-served via individual cups while seated in pews.

Meeting rooms are set up with tables and/or seating 6 feet apart. Capacity limits will follow current guidelines.

Food and beverage service: Buffet style service is not available. Pre-plated or pre-packaged individual meals/snacks are allowed if eaten in socially distant seating arrangements.

## **3. Hand hygiene**

There is signage at the entrance reminding to wash hands often. Hand sanitizer dispensers are available on posts in the lobby. Hand sanitizer is available throughout the church and in the office. There is signage in the restrooms reminding of proper hand-washing. Drinking fountains have been covered.

## **4. Building and facilities**

Whenever possible, doors are propped open for worship services. The air handlers in the worship area create negative air pressure. This means that air will not blow across you from a neighboring worshipper. The air is pulled up toward the ceiling. The air is filtered twice before recirculating. St Michael's has outsourced the maintenance of our HVAC system to maximize their effectiveness. See also #2 above.

## **5. Cleaning and disinfecting**

Regular practices of cleaning and disinfecting public spaces have been implemented, including restroom sink and toilet handles, door handles, elevator panels, railings, etc. The sanctuary is disinfected when multiple events occur within 24 hrs. (e.g. between services on Sunday) and wiped down following low volume events with seated participants.

Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas in the office is being conducted by office administrator, including door handles, copy machine, refrigerator, microwave, coffee pot, etc.

All cleaning products meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.

## **6. Training and communication**

Staff, members, and visitors have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 via signs on the entrance doors and throughout the church and in church announcements. Those staff functions that can practically stay at home to complete work may do so until St Michael's is fully opened to minimize gatherings. Worship service attendees are requested to text or otherwise report the date attended and location where they are sitting. Worshippers have the option of both in person and online options depending on their perceived personal risk.

If a person attends a service or meeting at the church and discovers that they have tested positive for Covid-19, they should contact the office or one of the pastors: Pastor Pat Simmons at (952) 451-0940 or [PastorPat@smlcb.org](mailto:PastorPat@smlcb.org), or Pastor Ryan Alvey at (952)-969-7582 or [PastorRyan@smlcb.org](mailto:PastorRyan@smlcb.org). Members and visitors will be notified as necessary based on possible dates of exposure at St. Michael's to alert them to consider getting testing or to observe for signs of COVID. Current guidelines for How and When to Quarantine (<https://mn.gov/covid19/about-covid/quarantine-or-isolate.jsp>) will be followed whenever possible.

Sick leave will be paid for employees of St. Michael's for any absence caused by COVID-19. We will continue to protect employees through the Family Medical Leave Act and the Family First Coronavirus Response Act Emergency Paid Sick Leave (Federal). Questions on leave policies should be directed to the Finance Director, Tom Solberg. Consistent with compliance with the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), staff members' health status and health information will be protected.

This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan has been approved by the Parish Council, communicated to staff, and posted on our website and in our newsletter. All staff, members, and visitors are advised via signage at the entrance not to enter the facility if they are experiencing symptoms or have contracted COVID-19.

## **7. Providing in-home services**

Should there be a need for an in-home visit, pastors and/or staff will follow the Universal Requirements and the Guidance for Caring for People in their Homes ([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/visitingathome.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/visitingathome.pdf)).

## **8. Shared transportation**

St. Michael's does not provide transportation to/from services. Our volunteer rideshare group is currently inactive, due to the COVID situation.

## **9. Shared temporary housing**

St. Michael's does not provide housing or shelter.

## **10. General considerations**

Facility assessments to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies should be done periodically as part of sound occupational health and public health practice. This plan will be reviewed periodically by staff and the Parish Council to ensure effectiveness and compliance with current guidelines.

## **Related guidance documents**

Guidance for Caring for People in Their Homes – for non-medical visits  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/visitingathome.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/visitingathome.pdf))

Planning Funeral and Memorial Services during COVID-19  
([www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/providers/mortsci/docs/planduringcovid.pdf))

Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf))

Gathering Requirements for Celebrations and Significant Life Events  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf))

For Sunday School or other youth programs that are not classroom style, seated events: COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf))