



August 10, 2020

Friends and Family of St. Mark Lutheran Church,

The COVID Response Team has been hard at work in response to the pandemic and to help safely prepare for property and building reopening. The communication that has been sent out, and will continue to be communicated, has all been included in this planning and execution. We know that it is quite the packet, as it is all-inclusive of our plans for safely reopening, and encourage you to read it if you have any questions. But we know many people are most curious about **WHEN** and **HOW** the building will reopen. Check out pages 9-13 for detailed plans about our different re-opening phases, or page 14 for an overall view.

As for where St. Mark is now: we are still operating out of Phase 1, which will continue through at least **November 1**. This decision has been made based on recommendations and mandates from Governor Walz, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the St. Paul Area Synod of the ELCA.

In short, this means that the physical building is closed. This *also* means that the church is more alive than ever *outside* of the walls of the building. Worship continues to be done virtually via Facebook and Youtube. Musicians, finance volunteers, and staff continue to enter the building when needed to complete necessary tasks and film for worship. Small Groups, including Bible Studies, Ministry Teams, and Social Gatherings, may meet outside in groups of 10 or less. Community Groups (Facility Renters) may also meet outside in small groups. When meeting outdoors, groups must sign up at least 24 hours in advance with the Office Manager's approval. Individuals should abide by social distancing of 6 feet or more and wear masks when necessary. All leaders will need to complete and sign the request for facility use (Appendix C; p. 17).

The opportunity to gather safely on church property has been a big goal for our team and community. May it be a reminder that church doesn't just happen "at church"; the church is alive when the body is present. And that is through each and every one of you! We encourage you to continue to care for yourself and others. This might look like checking in with five church members each week via text or email. It might look like handwritten letters to individuals in the directory. It could be inviting people to your backyard for a physically distanced dinner. You are encouraged to continue to care for one another in these creative ways and more.

While we continue to live into this ever-changing reality, the COVID Team is actively seeking ways to make the building of St. Mark a safer place to gather. We will be installing UV lights in our HVAC units to help disinfect the air. Everyone entering the building is required to wear a mask at all times (aside from when recording for worship), disinfect touched areas, and sign in and out. Staff are conducting wellness checks whenever they work in the building. And continued research and additions to safety are being added as we learn more about COVID-19 and the best practices for staying safe.

Peace be with you,  
St. Mark COVID Response Team