

## COVID-19 TASK FORCE UPDATE – September 2020

St. Paul's is blessed to offer many ministries to our congregants and to our community; before COVID-19 our building bustled day and night with church and community activities. And then – we were forced into shutdown. Everyone is anxious for life to return to the way it was; but no matter how impatient we become, the virus continues to control our lives. Please be patient with your Council, Pastor and the Task Force. We are spending many hours in research, prayer, studying compliance directives from our Synod, the State and the CDC – and listening to your concerns and requests. In spite of the many challenges before us, your support and understanding gives us the inspiration to build a new St. Paul's. So far, the following has been accomplished.

- A 9:30am Sunday service continues to be held outside where moving air and sunshine serve to abate the coronavirus. In order to offer Sunday service: new hygiene guidelines and communion procedures were needed; ushers and communion assistants stepped up to learn new ways of serving our congregants; volunteers came forward for set-up.
- A virtual service is offered on our St. Paul's website. New skills, volunteers, training and equipment were needed to make this happen.
- Over the last month the Task Force has met with every committee, and outside organization that uses our building, to discuss their plans for moving forward during this pandemic. Talks were also held with our Music Staff to make plans for the resumption of Choirs when we move our service indoors at the end of October. As ministries return to our building, new procedures have been developed to protect everyone's safety and health. Each group is assigned a specific area/room in the building, for their use only, thereby preventing the spread of germs from others. A sanitizing schedule for common areas and bathrooms is followed after each group's use. COVID-19 safe practices are communicated to everyone using the building. With measured caution we welcome back to the St. Paul's building our Choirs, Sunday School, Music in Motion, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

However, there is much more to be accomplished:

Moving our Sunday service inside requires far more attention than an outside service. How will we keep our parishioners safe? How many will be allowed into the building when the state regulations limit inside use to 25 people; our outside service averages around 50 each Sunday and greater attendance is anticipated going forward. How do we control traffic to ensure social distancing? How do we control traffic in the building so that our Sexton can manage the required sanitizing? How do we manage contact with bulletins and worship material? How will our choirs and musicians be protected during practice and performances? So many areas to address.... Please be patient, understanding, and offer your help where it is safe for you to do so.

There are other ministries of our church that may be anxious to return to the building: committees, ministries that serve our community, and ministries that serve the religious and social needs of our congregants. Groups that require one gathering and groups that will meet weekly or monthly. The Task

Force is anxious to talk with you, contact anyone on the Task Force to begin the dialogue. We will need to know:

- Dates/days/times that you will need the building.
- Approximately how many will be in attendance.
- What else will the group need?

And, unfortunately, there are some building usages that must remain on hold. The goal is certainly to resume all activities; this will be accomplished in coordination with the safety and health of everyone and in compliance with our Synod, State and CDC regulations. For now:

- If your committees, group, ministry is not currently scheduled to meet in the building, please continue to meet off premises.
- Private and limited attendance for weddings, Baptisms, and funerals will be given consideration. Dialogue should be established with the Pastor.
- The building continues to be closed during normal business hours, staff are working from home where feasible; however, the church phone is being answered.

#### **REMINDERS FROM THE CDC:**

In general, the more closely you interact with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. You are at a higher risk when:

- Engaging with new people or Interacting with a larger group of people, especially over a prolonged period.
- Being with other people who aren't social distancing by 6 feet, or not wearing a mask.
- The closer you are to other people who may be infected, the greater your risk.
- Indoor spaces are more risky than outdoor spaces where it might be harder to keep people apart and there is less ventilation.

What you need to do daily and consistently:

- Wash/sanitize hands frequently following potential contamination.
- Wear a face mask and keep 6 feet of social distance when out in public or when inside gathering with non-family.
- Do not touch your face, nose, eyes.
- Do not handshake, hug, embrace or kiss others.

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