

COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan
for
St. Mark Lutheran Church
August 2020

Developed by: COVID Response Team

Date: August 4, 2020

St. Mark Lutheran Church Plan

St. Mark 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 preserve public health. It is expected that 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.

This plan has been developed with church staff and members by the COVID-19 Response Team. Guidance and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have been incorporated into the plan as appropriate including:

- Hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting;
- Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;
- Controls for social distancing;
- Housekeeping, including cleaning, disinfection and decontamination;
- Communications and training that will be provided to persons on-site; and
- Management and supervision necessary to ensure effective implementation of the plan.

This preparedness and response plan assume the following:

1. St. Mark will follow guidance from the Minnesota Governor, the Minnesota Department of Health, and from the ELCA.
2. St. Mark personnel will fall into different disease risk categories and decisions for return to the facility will be made in accordance with medical and public health guidance for risk stratification (e.g. age, health status). St Mark's role is not to determine the risk level of individuals; rather the church leadership should ensure that individuals can make their own informed choices and be supported.
3. St. Mark personnel and activities resumption will occur in a phased approach and comply with established guidance provided in this plan.
4. The COVID-19 situation will evolve and St. Mark will remain adaptable and nimble to the dynamic environment. The baseline level of risk for those working and using our facility will change as restaurants and retail businesses reopen, schools reopen, etc., requiring a reassessment of what level of resumption and precautions are appropriate.
5. Those functions that can practically stay at home to complete work will do so until St. Mark is fully opened to minimize large gatherings.
6. Social distancing, wearing of masks or other appropriate PPE, hand-washing, and disinfection of surfaces are key factors to reducing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

7. Large gatherings are unlikely to be safe over the next several months. Worship services and other large gatherings should be carried out virtually.
8. Personal responsibility is key to safe operations and the avoidance of disease transmission. Educational materials will be developed for staff, members, and visitors to the St. Mark facility.

COVID-19 Response Team

The COVID-19 Response Team is comprised of the following members: Kent Barnard, Mollie Dvorak (Pastor), Sandy Geslin (Housekeeper), Linda Madsen, Mary Mortinsen, Dave Mundale (Council President), Tory Pluchek (Office Manager), and Floyd Saunders. The COVID-19 Response Team is the working group for the COVID-19 assessment and implementation of this plan. Infection control and occupational safety and health plans will apply to anyone working in or visiting the church (e.g., all staff, members, and visitors).

- The COVID-19 Response team and staff leadership will follow all applicable regulations and public health agency guidelines.

Federal guidelines: CDC

State guidelines: MDH

Local guidelines: Anoka County & City of Circle Pines

Affiliation guidelines: ELCA

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 as guidelines change to ensure effectiveness.

Facility Public Health Measures

Infection prevention measures are being implemented at our facility in accordance with public health guidance and best practices.

Handwashing

Anyone in the St. Mark facility is instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their time on-site, prior to any mealtimes, and after using the toilet. Hand-sanitizer dispensers (that use sanitizers of greater than 60% alcohol) can be used for hand hygiene in place of soap and water, as long as hands are not visibly soiled. Hand sanitizer stations will be available in the Narthex, Sanctuary, Front Office, and Fellowship Hall/Kitchen.

- A “Clean Your Hands!” poster is located in all restrooms providing proper hand washing methods. Posters are available from CDC and state departments of health.
- Custodial staff are checking and replenishing soap dispensers, paper towels, and hand sanitizer stations regularly.

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

Everyone is asked to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face—in particular their mouth, nose, and eyes—with their hands. Tissues should be disposed of in the trash and individuals should wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette reminders appear on posters and tissues and trash receptacles are readily available.

- The CDC “Stop the Spread of Germs” poster are posted in the Narthex and other common areas.
- Tissues in common areas, including front office, narthex, fellowship hall
- Employees are expected to wear cloth face coverings (masks) in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Drinking stations and water-fountains are not available for use.

Social Distancing

Everyone entering the facility is asked to practice social distancing on public health guidance and best practices. These measures may be adjusted according to phases of this preparedness and response plan.

Remote Work and Adjusted Onsite Hours

St. Mark has implemented the following procedures and practices for remote work and adjusted hours.

- Telework is approved and expected for all persons who can accomplish their primary duty functions from home.
- Staff are provided guidance and training to work remotely.
- Flexible hours are available to minimize the number of persons in the facility at one time.

Onsite Work

Staff, members, and visitors will avoid gathering in groups and in confined areas where six feet separation cannot be maintained. Staff, members, and visitors are required to wear masks at all times. Masks may be removed when staff are in their personal offices and where six feet of separation is feasible.

- In areas where shared workspace is in use, sanitizing wipes and/or sprays are available to clean prior to and after use. Wipes must be immediately disposed of in the trash after use.
- Staff/visitors clean and sanitize after using phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, offices, or other personal work tools and equipment.

Housekeeping

Regular housekeeping practices are being enhanced by St. Mark staff in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). Frequent cleaning and disinfecting will be conducted in shared spaces and high-touch areas (e.g. door handles, railings).

- Custodial staff will be provided resources for proper cleaning and sanitizing techniques, in accordance with the CDC. A copy of this information will also be available in the custodial closet and main office for anyone else to review.
- All cleaning products meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.
- If there is a confirmed positive case reported to St. Mark, the housekeeper will coordinate cleaning and disinfecting of the individual's work space.
- The housekeeper will clean public spaces such as the Narthex, restrooms, door handles, and handrails regularly.

- All staff and volunteers will complete the daily cleaning checklist (Appendix A).

Screening, Exposure, and Illness Policies

St. Mark will notify all staff of screening protocols, self-monitoring guidelines, and policies for staff exposed or exhibiting symptoms. All COVID-19 related updates will be relayed to staff with updates occurring.

St. Mark has leave policies that encourage staff to stay at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when they are required by a healthcare provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household. These policies include:

- St. Mark Sick Leave Policy
- St. Mark Vacation Time Policy
- St. Mark Leaves of Absence
- Family First Coronavirus Response Act Emergency Paid Sick Leave (Federal)

Questions on leave policies should be directed to the office.

Employee Self-Screening for those Working On-Site

Staff members should conduct self-monitoring for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms of the virus often include but are not limited to fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Information on COVID-19 signs and symptoms are available at the [CDC website](#).

Staff must report symptoms to the Pastor and/or Council. Employees exhibiting symptoms should not come into the church.

- Take your temperature when you arrive at work. Fill out the screening form (Appendix B) within 10 minutes at the beginning of each work day.
- Report any exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals, respiratory symptoms, sore throat, or dry cough to your supervisor.
- If the employee indicates any of these conditions, the supervisor may require that the employee stay home, and the employee should seek guidance from their healthcare provider.

If an employee begins to exhibit symptoms at work, they will be asked to go home immediately and self-isolate.

Confirmed Cases

If a COVID-19 case is confirmed in a staff member or in a member of their household, the staff member will be asked to remain at home and considered to be in quarantine for no less than 14 days. A facility assessment will begin to determine what additional public health and cleaning measures should be implemented.

St. Mark will work with the Minnesota Department of Health to inform staff members if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in our facility, and MDH will provide instructions regarding staff self-quarantine measures.

Consistent with compliance with the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), staff members health status and health information will be protected.

Communications and Training

This preparedness and response plan is communicated with staff, groups meeting onsite, and volunteers via email. Training is available to staff and persons using the facility.

- Return to Work Training
 - Topics should include but not limited to: Personal Protective Equipment, disinfection measures, social distancing protocol, COVID-19 signs and symptoms information, return-to-work policies, self-monitoring practices, signage, time-off options and all other COVID-19-related safe workplace changes.
- Enhanced Cleaning Protocols
- St. Mark visitor requirements handout
- St. Mark facility use handout

Facility Use

St. Mark serves as a gathering place for congregation and community members. Gathering purposes in the congregation include: congregational work, support to social justice missions, celebration events, community meeting, and social engagements. Use of the facility will be based on the phases of this plan and align with state guidance and policies. Priority will be given mission related activities.

Any group that would like to use the facility while this plan is operational must request use using the Request for Facility Use form (Appendix C). Each request will be reviewed by the office manager.

If approved, each group utilizing the facility will be required:

- Review information provided by St. Mark
- Share St. Mark facility rules with participants
 - Conduct appropriate social distancing
 - Wear masks
 - Wash hands
 - Cover your cough
- Take attendance to include full name and contact information (phone and/or email). Roster may be emailed to the Office Manager or left in the dropbox outside the front door within 24 hours of meeting.

No member of the congregation or community may use the facility until they have received approval from St. Mark Lutheran Church.

Resources

Appendix D provides a list of resources to support the church's decisions and activities during the COVID19 pandemic.

St. Mark Lutheran Church Phases

The purpose of this phase approach is to provide guidance and direction for activities at the church. The disease progression is imperfectly known and there may be times where *St. Mark* may need to move back and forth between phases.

Phase 0: Stay at Home (March 16-June 18, 2020)	
<p>External Conditions: Government Orders for communities to stay at home. Disease spread is occurring in the community and hospitalization are increasing. Testing is limited and there are widespread PPE shortages.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): Government issues to stay at home orders.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship services move to online delivery. ● Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. ● Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptism) are postponed and all participants notified. <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All St. Mark staff will telework ● Staff may return to the facility to acquire equipment and record worship segments. ● Bible studies and small groups will meet online.

Phase 1: Small Outdoor Gatherings (June 19, 2020 - TBD)

External Conditions:

State is actively monitoring case counts and availability of testing is increasing. Contact tracing is in place and PPE is available for social distancing purposes (e.g. cloth masks).

Criteria (for phase):

State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.

Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to the facility.

Church Activities

Worship

- Worship is held online.
- Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people.
- Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptisms) should be kept to less than 10 in attendance and be able to maintain social distancing. Approval by the Pastor is required.

Outdoor Activities On-Site

- All St. Mark staff will work from home, if able to do so
- Office functions are limited to ensure essential operations.
- Bible studies and small groups continue to meet online. Groups of less than 10 may schedule an outdoor gathering.*
- Church councils and leadership teams of less than 10 might consider meeting outdoors while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, or continue meeting online.*
- Facility users/renters may be allowed with approval and based on size and mission. Social distancing and public health measures will be enforced. *

**Groups must schedule with the Office Manager at least 24 hours in advance and gain approval. The number gathered may change based on Minnesota and CDC guidelines.*

Phase 2: Small Group Gatherings Indoors	
<p>External Conditions: Government leaders continue relaxation of social distancing measures. Cases of COVID-19 are decreasing and testing is available. PPE is widely available.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.</p> <p>Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to campus</p> <p>Church has the ability to gradually expand number of people in the church building while maintaining social distancing</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship is held online. ● Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. ● Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptisms) should be kept to less than 10 in attendance and be able to maintain social distancing. Approval by the Pastor is required. <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All St. Mark staff will work from home, if able to do so ● Office functions are limited to ensure essential operations. ● Bible studies and small groups of 10 or less may meet in person, while maintaining some online options for high risk individuals and those who do not feel comfortable being in public. Approval is required.* ● Groups, teams, and committees can meet in person. Approval is required.* <p>High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff, volunteers, or program participants, are encouraged to evaluate their physical participation level.</p> <p>Social distancing and public health practices (e.g. wearing masks) will be implemented while at church and in community ministry, as is recommended in public spaces.</p> <p><i>*Groups must schedule with the Office Manager at least 24 hours in advance and gain approval. The number gathered may change based on Minnesota and CDC guidelines.</i></p>

Phase 3: Reduced Capacity	
<p>External Conditions: Government leaders continue relaxation of social distancing measures. Cases of COVID19 continue to decrease and testing is available. PPE is widely available.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.</p> <p>Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to campus</p> <p>Church has the ability to gradually expand number of people in the church while maintaining social distancing</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship is held online and in-person with social distancing measures implemented per local guidance, beginning with 25% capacity. Multiple services may be considered to spread out participation. ● Entrance and exit into the church will be designed to avoid gathering. ● Communion may be offered in alignment with public health guidance. ● Group singing may be considered based on recommendations by public health authorities. ● No-touch alternatives for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Hymnals will be removed from the Sanctuary, and single use bulletins will be provided with all worship materials. ● No fellowship/social hour will be scheduled during this phase. People are encouraged to leave the building after the service (no mingling). <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● St. Mark staff will begin implementing limited office hours, with attention to cleaning. ● St. Mark and Community groups may meet in person, abiding with social distance guidelines. Approval is required. <p>High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff, volunteers, or program participants, are encouraged to evaluate their physical participation level.</p> <p>Social distancing and public health practices (e.g. wearing masks) will be implemented while at church and in community ministry, as is recommended in public spaces.</p>

Phase 4: Full Capacity	
<p>External Conditions: There are no or minimal state restrictions. Vaccine available. Widespread testing and identification of new COVID-19 cases, with quarantining is occurring.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): No or minimal state restrictions.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Business as usual.</p>

St. Mark Activities Chart

	Phase 0	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Worship Services	Online	Online	Online	25% capacity in person + Online	Full Capacity
Staff	Telework	Telework	Telework	Telework + Limited Office Hours	Resume On-Site Hours
Faith Formation Ministries	Online	Online	In-person with Social Distancing + Online	In-person with Social Distancing + Online	Resume In-Person Gatherings
Small Groups Ministries and Teams	Online	Online + Outdoors with Social Distancing	Online + In-person with Social Distancing & Limited Capacity	Online + In-person with Social Distancing	Resume In-Person Gatherings
Community Groups	Online / Postponed	Online + Outdoors with Social Distancing	Online + In-person with Social Distancing & Limited Capacity	In-person with Social Distancing	Resume In-Person Gatherings
Life Celebrations	Postponed	Less than 10, with Approval.	Less than 10, with Approval.	Limited Capacity, with Approval.	Resume In-Person Celebrations

Appendix A – St. Mark Daily Cleaning Checklist

Date: _____

Daily Opening Checklist

Name _____

- Disinfect any common areas or items you touched to open the office
 - Light switches, door handles, printer, etc.

Daily Closing Checklist

Name _____

If more than one person is closing, please highlight items that are remaining for the actual last person to do.

- Turn off all lights
- Disinfect any common areas or items you touched to open the office
 - Light switches, door handles, printer, etc.

Lock doors and ensure they are closed and locked

Appendix B – St. Mark Staff COVID-19 Screening



St. Mark Lutheran Church COVID-19 Screening Form

This form is to be completed by each employee that reports to the office. The form is to be completed within 10 minutes upon arrival and emailed to office@stmarkcp.org. If a paper copy is completed, you can email a picture then shred the form.

First and Last Name _____

Today's Date _____ Current Time _____

In the past 24 hours, have you had any one of these symptoms?

- Fever (100.4 or higher) Yes No
- A new cough Yes No
- Shortness of breath Yes No

In the last 14 days, have you had close contact* with someone who has a laboratory confirmed positive case of COVID-19 or was diagnosed with COVID-19? Yes No

If you marked yes to any of the above questions, please stay home and contact the Pastor or Office Manager.

**Close contact means being within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more.*

Updated 07/30/2020

Appendix C – Request for Facility Use

Request for St. Mark Lutheran Church Use

St. Mark priority continues to be the health and safety of all members of our community. However, we also recognize that our facility supports the missions of our congregation and our community. Consistent with Minnesota orders and public health advice, this form will enable church leadership to identify who might be permitted back to use the facility, starting first with groups who support essential church and social justice missions for our congregation and community.

For everyone's safety, the church's intent is to slowly and gradually invite groups back. Decisions for facility use will be based on phases of the St. Mark preparedness and response plan. To facilitate approval for use of our St. Mark, please complete the following form.

Name:

Group Size:

Contact Information of Leader (name, email, phone):

Will this Gathering be Repeated (e.g. weekly)? If yes, describe frequency.

Date and Time for Gathering(s):

- While using the St. Mark building or property, we ask that all groups (St. Mark and Community Groups) abide by social distancing guidelines; including: staying 6-feet+ apart with people not in your household and wearing masks.
- Groups **must** schedule their meetings at least 24 hours in advance with the Office Manager and receive approval.
- Groups will be **required** to submit full names (first and last) with contact information (phone and/or email) to the Office Manager within 24 hours of gathering. This will allow us to do contact tracing if someone tests positive for COVID-19.
- During Phase 1 of building re-opening, groups may not enter the building for any reasons, including: to make or serve coffee, to gather tables and chairs, to use restrooms, etc.
- Groups will be asked to wipe down all touched surfaces with disinfectant wipes or spray after gathering.

Signature of Leader: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D - Guidance for developing a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

General

CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

Businesses

CDC Resources for businesses and employers – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html

CDC General business frequently asked questions – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Federal OSHA – www.osha.gov

Minnesota Department of Health

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/>

Handwashing

www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html

www.cdc.gov/handwashing

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html

www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

Social distancing

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

Housekeeping

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html

www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

Employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html

Training

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html

www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf