

Moving Forward Through and Beyond COVID-19

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Durham, NC

"For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Romans 8:24)

Congregational Purpose:

To inspire and engage one another to do what is just, show love and fulfill God's word.

Core values:

Worship * Compassionate Service * Hospitality * Teaching and Learning

Sources of guidance

Local and state governments, CDC

Current status: NC phase 2; Durham: no gatherings of more than 10 indoors, 25 outdoors; masks required. Churches technically exempt, but we choose to follow official recommendations for public health.

ELCA and NC Synod

Refrain from in person gathering of more than 10 indoors and 25 outdoors until NC moves to Phase 3. Develop written protocols and implementation plans prior to gathering in person. Points to consider:

- *relevant provisions in insurance policy (liability)*
- *hygiene and cleaning resources*
- *outdoor worship (safer than indoor)*
- *activities that spread virus droplets, e.g. singing or playing wind instruments (service of the Word might be safer choice to start)*
- *space capacities under distancing guidelines*

Goals

- Continue to be the people of God in this place as we gather for worship and fellowship virtually and, eventually, in person.
- Sustain and grow our mission for the congregation, community and world.
- Fulfill mission without compromising safety.

*We are a resurrection people. We are a resilient community of faith.
We wait, hope, and trust in the Lord to guide us.*

Intentions

- to be **informed by and respectful of guidance of local, synod, state and national authorities** and experts and collective comfort level; be prepared to adapt as conditions change.
- to prioritize the **health, safety and overall wellness** of our members and staff
- to require and facilitate **practices of basic personal health** recommendations: masks, hand sanitizer, handwashing and social distancing
- to continue **current practices of virtual worship, meetings, learning and gathering** as well as drive-through communion as both near term offerings and part of long-term options
- to be **attentive and responsive to expressed needs** for meetings, conversations and personal support
- to support staff in decision-making processes
- to continue regular and creative efforts to keep **members informed and connected** via technology and in-person (phone) contact
- to **evaluate indoor and outdoor spaces** for gathering/worship possibilities
- to begin **planning for outdoor gatherings** when local guidelines allow 50 people to gather
- to purchase **hygiene related supplies** and establish **specific protocols** for a variety of gatherings
- to **coordinate planning with Wildflower Cottage and St Paul's Preschool/PMO**
- to **limit building use by external groups** (not including St Paul's Preschool/PMO, Wildflower Cottage)
- to maintain **regular communication and interaction** with the congregation

Protocols for in-person visits to church

Drive-through Communion

- Pastor, vicar and lay assistants prepare elements and equipment, set up in parking lot; assistants direct traffic, receive offering, and support distribution of communion. Those handling materials to be distributed wear gloves; all wear masks.
- members arrive in cars via 1 entrance, stay in cars, wear masks
- members receive communion elements and blessing in car, keep cup and bowl to dispose at home
- members exit via the opposite entrance

Quiet Meditation and Prayer

- sign in at front desk (for contact tracing if necessary)
- wear mask at all times inside building
- wash or sanitize hands upon entry and exit
- occupy designated pews
- if a hymnal or Bible is used, place it on designated bookshelf at back of sanctuary

Work and Project Groups

- Prearrange for specific purpose that cannot be accomplished virtually
- sign in at front desk (for contact tracing if necessary)
- wear mask at all times inside building
- wash or sanitize hands upon entry and exit
- clean surfaces (tables, books, etc.) upon completion of activity
- if restrooms are used, follow usual handwashing procedures and spacing
- 10 people or fewer, socially distanced

Outdoor workers

- observe social distance
- if there is need to enter building, follow “work and project group” protocol

Member Visits

- Prearrange for specific purpose that cannot be accomplished virtually
- sign in at front desk (for contact tracing if necessary)
- wear mask at all times inside building
- wash hands thoroughly upon entry
- clean surfaces (tables, books, etc.) upon completion of activity
- 10 people or fewer, socially distanced

Special Events and Services (baptisms, interments, etc.)

The family works with the pastor and other staff to develop a plan within existing limitations on number of people, spacing, etc.

Community groups

Most community groups that use space at St. Paul's are not meeting at this time. If there is a compelling reason for them to meet in person, they may request permission to do so at the church, either indoors (for 10 or fewer) or outdoors (25 or fewer). They would need to follow the relevant protocol above plus

- provide a written explanation of group's COVID-19 safety procedures
- provide a list of participants and group leader contact for every meeting
- complete the provided cleaning and sanitizing checklist after each meeting and before the next group starts