

St. John Lutheran Church
Parish Plan of Return
May 21, 2020

When St. John does return to gathering for parish activities, we seek to do it in ways that are inclusive and safe for the most vulnerable among us. **We gather because we love God, but we limit ourselves because we love our neighbor.** It is important to stress that in this time, not gathering for worship does not make you a “bad Christian” or mean that you don’t love God. In fact, it is entirely possible that the most loving thing you can do right now for yourself and your fellow Christians is not gather for worship.

Please **STAY AT HOME** if you are symptomatic or have been exposed to someone who has shown symptoms. Please *consider staying at home* if you are a “high risk” individual.

For the sake of the health and safety of our members, St. John will strive to follow the guidelines from the Northwestern Ohio Synod office, the State of Ohio Department of Health, and the Center for Disease Control.

Worship: We anticipate that we will resume gathering for worship the weekend of June 6th and 7th. However, it will ultimately be when the gathering limit for Ohio is lifted or raised to more than 10 people. We will confirm and communicate our reopening date when we know for certain. (If the gathering ban is changed to only groups of 25 or 50 or less than our regular/anticipated attendance, we will take steps to modify these plans accordingly.)

1. When we gather, we ask worshipers to do a self-assessment. If they have a temperature, are not feeling well, or consider themselves to be in the ‘high risk’ category for this virus, we ask that they please stay home and worship with us on-line. Please think about the most vulnerable in the sanctuary when you are considering whether or not you should attend worship.
2. We will ask worshipers to use personal protective equipment. Please wear a mask, wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, maintain the proper distancing (current recommendation is 6 feet), and refrain from fellowship/physical touch outside of immediate family.
3. For the sake of physical distancing, cleaning, and sanitizing; we will strive to use as little of the building as possible. Hallways, rooms, and areas of the church may be closed off. Please only use designated areas, entrances, and exits.
4. We will ask worshipers to enter and exit the building through the office doors (south doors, off the parking lot) and use the elevator or stairs to enter/exit the front of the sanctuary.
5. In the sanctuary we will rope off pews and ask worshipers to respect physical distancing of fellow worshipers.
6. For the sake of cleaning and sanitizing we will remove all Bibles, hymnals, seat cushions, etc. from the pews.
7. For the sake of cleaning and sanitizing we ask worshipers to use only the upstairs restrooms (off the elevator/near the social hall).
8. Paul Frederickson and/or the AB Clean Team will be cleaning and sanitizing the sanctuary after each worship service and the rest of the building throughout the week.
9. In-person worship will return in phases... For now, we will continue with virtual lectors and recorded music (we will keep our weekly rotation of recording music; Saturday musicians one weekend, Sunday musicians the next).

10. For now, the song leaders/choirs will not sing/lead worship in person. We are seeking ways to make singing less of a high-risk activity.
11. For now, we will continue to refrain from Holy Communion. We are seeking a way to resume sharing the Lord's Supper that is theologically sound and physically safe.
12. For now, we will refrain from sharing the peace. We ask that when worshipers do greet each other they respect personal space and physical distance.
13. For now, we will refrain from having ushers collect the offering during worship. Plates will be placed next to the entrance/exit of the sanctuary.
14. Online worship will continue for those who are unable or chose not to gather for worship.
15. We are seeking to add a "Video Producer" position to our St. John staff to continue our high-quality worship recordings.
16. Currently the State of Ohio is asking organizations to do Contact Tracing. Therefore, we will be placing a volunteer at the door to record names of worshipers and to take a picture of the congregation at each worship service.
17. If a case of COVID-19 is reported, we will follow the appropriate Ohio Health Department/CDC procedure.

Parish Life: Required ongoing social distancing does not only impact worship but every facet of congregational life including Fellowship, Education, Ministry groups, Committees, Community Gatherings, Parties, Showers, etc.

1. For now, we will not be permitting outside groups to use the social hall or basement for community gatherings, parties, showers, etc.
2. Church groups (committees, circles, scouts, etc.) are asked to only meet in small groups, and when possible meet outside. They are asked to maintain the same social distancing/mask-wearing/group size guidelines.
3. If a group does use the building, they are asked to notify Paul/the church office so we can be sure their meeting space is appropriately cleaned/sanitized.
4. Funerals and funeral luncheons will be determined on a case by case basis, ensuring that they meet the appropriate current safety recommendations.

Closing Comments: We will continue to communicate by text, email, Facebook, mailings, Forerunner, etc. Please contact Pastor O'Brien, Rick Buhrow (Congregational President), or Diana Pfaff (Congregational Vice-President) if you have any questions or if there is anything we forgot to address.

Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid". John 14:27

These are very strange times... but remember, WE ARE THE CHURCH! And God is with us! Ministry and mission haven't stopped because the building is closed or our gatherings are limited. It may take some time to get this all figured out, but we will get through this together.

GOD's PEACE!