

First Lutheran's Plan for Resuming In Person Ministry

The ability to resume our on site in-person ministry was dependent upon the lifting of mandated gathering restrictions of ten or less. Understanding that the COVID-19 virus is not going away soon, the perception of many might be that it is better to not gather in person at all yet. However, it is also important that we as a church allow people the opportunity to gather together in person around both Word and Sacrament if they so desire. Yet we do not want to do this carelessly or thoughtlessly. As we look forward to resuming our congregation's on site ministry gradually, here are some temporary guidelines and actions we will be taking. If you decide to attend worship in person at this time you will have a different experience than 3 months ago and ask for your understanding. We also ask that those who do join us abide by the guidelines below to show respect and honor to the other members present. *Recognize that these are starting points that will be adjusted as we move forward.*

Worship Service Times

- ❖ Thursdays at 6:30 PM, Sundays at 8:00 AM - In Person
- ❖ Sundays at 9:30 AM - Live Stream Only

Our first in person worship will be this Sunday, May 24th, at 8:00 AM. Having only one in person service on Sunday allows for proper cleaning between services. If you have the ability to come Thursday night, consider worshipping then to spread out even further. Our live stream will continue as it has been over the last few months.

General Guidelines

- ❖ If you are sick or have any symptoms of COVID-19, we ask that you stay home.
- ❖ If you are considered a higher health risk or would prefer not worshipping in the building yet at this time, do what you feel is best for your own health and safety. We understand and respect your decision. We encourage you to continue making use of the live streamed service.
- ❖ If you worship with us and test positive for COVID-19, please contact Pastor Heuer immediately.
- ❖ While we will not require it, we encourage you to wear a face mask in the building for the benefit and respect of others.
- ❖ We ask that you maintain some distance between your family unit and those around you. We will be glad to see each other, but this is not yet the time for handshakes or hugs.
- ❖ We will have hand sanitizer available at various spots in the narthex.

Worship Services

- ❖ We will only seat about 25% of capacity (or about 50 people) spread out in the sanctuary.
- ❖ Families will sit near the ends of every third pew. The other pews will be clearly roped off. Chairs can also be set up in the narthex if needed or desired. If you sit on a chair in the narthex please keep it in its place after the service. The balcony will be unavailable.
- ❖ Hymnals have been removed, and the entire service will be printed in the service folder and projected for your convenience. If you worship on Thursday night, please do not put the used service folders back on the stack for Sunday. Take them home or recycle them.
- ❖ Services will be modified to limit the amount of singing. We recognize it isn't easy to sing with masks on, but we also are hearing concerns from experts about singing within an enclosed space. Pastor will lead the singing from the front. Hum along or sing softly if you feel comfortable.

- ❖ Holy Communion will be offered at their normal times but with some modifications.
 - Pastor will wear a mask when distributing and use hand sanitizer before each table.
 - You will be ushered up after the previous table has seated.
 - There will only be 4 people per side spaced out to form one table. There will be an "X" on the floor at the communion rail to assist you in where to go. Please remain standing. Family units may stand next to each other.
 - Only individual cups of wine will be offered.
 - Pastor will still offer private communion. Please contact him if that is your desire.
- ❖ The offering plates will be in the back of church for you to place your gifts of love and thankfulness in as you leave. Keep in mind that you may also give online at www.firstatthecross.com/give.
- ❖ Pastor will usher you out from back to front instead of front to back.
- ❖ If you desire to converse with one another please do not be reckless. We simply ask that you maintain some distance as best as possible and talk outside in the parking lot.
- ❖ Coffee and other refreshments will not be offered after services for the time being.

Other Ministry Activities and Fellowship (Bible Studies, Fellowship Activities, Meetings, etc.)

- ❖ We will still continue to email and mail the weekly news bulletin as we have been doing.
- ❖ On site Bible studies will remain suspended for the time being.
- ❖ Thursday evening virtual bible study will move to Wednesday night with the return of Thursday night worship.
- ❖ Pastor will continue to share daily devotions and Bible studies online through the church's new audio podcast (<https://firstelkhorn.podbean.com/>). Links to new content will be posted on our Facebook page as well as on our website.
- ❖ The various boards, committees, and fellowship groups can meet at their own discretion (virtually or in person) as long as proper distancing can be maintained. The next Congregational voters' meeting will be held in the church with the same guidelines in place for worship services on Sunday, July 12th at 6pm.
- ❖ Potlucks and other fellowship meals will remain suspended until further notice.
- ❖ VBS and Summer Celebration are still TBD and we will send out further announcements soon.

This is not a return to pre-COVID "business as usual". We will pray for wisdom so that - as much as possible - we do not put ourselves or anyone else at risk.