

Salem Lutheran Church, Albert Lea, MN
COVID-19 Preparedness Plan
This plan is subject to change at any time.

PURPOSE: Salem Lutheran Church with guidance from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), has formulated a plan of action to safely gather for in-person worship services. As a community of faith, our primary concern is to follow Jesus' commandment to love thy neighbor. This means it is paramount that we safeguard the health and well-being of our members, staff and the general public. To achieve this goal, this plan was developed in consultation with local health professionals and adheres to the guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, and the Minnesota Department of Health. This document is based on industry guidance for safe gathering as faith-based communities, as places of worship, for weddings, and for funerals. This plan must be evaluated, monitored, executed, and updated under the supervision of a designated "Plan Administrator" within the organization of Salem Lutheran Church. The designated "Plan Administrator" shall be the Church Council.

This plan must be posted on site in an easily accessible location that will allow for the Plan to be readily reviewed by all leadership, staff, members and visitors.

Occupancy must be reduced to accommodate for the required social distancing of at least six feet between people who do not live in the same household. In indoor settings, occupancy must not exceed 50% of total occupancy (with 6 foot distancing maintained), with a maximum of 250 people in a single self-contained space. In outdoor settings, gatherings must not exceed 250 people.

These guidelines explain how services will be conducted until this plan is changed or additional guidance is given by the MN Department of Health and the CDC. Please note that larger gatherings are still only allowed for regular services, funerals and weddings. Indoor social gatherings or celebrations are still limited to 10 or fewer attendees.

Pastors, musicians, ushers, and guides for events at Salem are all considered "**staff**" in this document. Those attending worship, meetings, groups, and/or activities are referred to as "**participant**".

GENERAL GUIDELINES: As we gather in-person as a community for worship services, there are certain individuals for whom it might be best to remain home and continue to enjoy video and on-line services until pandemic restrictions are lessened. These general guidelines provide some advice on making the personal decision whether or not to return to in-person services.

- Those in high risk categories- over 65 with underlying health issues- are encouraged to stay home at this time. Worship services will continue to be shared through video links.
- Anyone (staff or participant) who is experiencing any symptoms associated with COVID-19 should stay home. These include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste and smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Anyone who is living with someone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (see above) should stay home.
- Anyone who begins to feel unwell while they are in the building should leave immediately and isolate themselves at home. The guides and ushers will be monitoring for any signs of illness.
- Physical (social) distance guidelines of 6 feet will be observed throughout the building.
- **All participants, 5 years old and older, are required to wear a face covering or mask while in the building.** Masks will be available to those who do not arrive with one. Cloth face coverings are NOT a substitute for maintaining physical (social) distancing of 6 feet.

- Salem Lutheran Church will make every effort to enforce the guidelines put forth in this plan.

A. STAFF PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

Ensure Sick Staff Stay Home

1. Staff are required to conduct a self-check and stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If you or anyone in your household has had any related symptoms over the last 4-5 days, stay home.
2. Staff with COVID-19 symptoms should be sent home immediately. If they cannot be sent home immediately isolate them in a closed room until they can be sent home. Staff who have been in close contact with a household member with COVID should not be at work until their quarantine period is finished.
3. If staff have been exposed to confirmed COVID-19 in the facility, they shall communicate this with the Church Council, who will gather the necessary information and begin the tracking of events and those who have been in contact with said staff. Notification to those in possible contact will follow.
4. Medical leave is stated in the Defined Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders of our Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Staff will be required to quarantine if confirmed with COVID-19.
5. All staff and participants will have their temperature checked prior to beginning their duties for worship services.

Physical (Social) Distancing - Staff Must Be At Least Six-Feet Apart

1. Staff will maximize remote-working as much as possible, except for those duties that require on-site presence.
2. Office hours are flexible at this time. When more than one staff person is in the building at a time, they are to maintain physical distancing of 6 feet.
3. There are rooms in the facility that provide the physical distance of 6 feet required for meetings. The Conference Room for 10 or fewer people. The fellowship hall will be designated and used for this purpose for meetings larger than 10 people.

Church Office Hygiene

1. Staff are required to regularly wash their hands. Hand sanitizer is readily available and accessible in the office at all times. Each staff member has a face mask, and gloves are available when needed.
2. Each staff member will be required to clean and disinfect their work area when finished. The financial office computer and desk are used by more than one person, and it is imperative that it is cleaned after each use to reduce any transmission possibility.
3. There will be no food served or shared in any office area.
4. Tissues are provided in each office area.

Building and Ventilation Protocols

1. Established protocols for starting mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and other systems after non-use will be followed.
2. Windows can be propped open to provide fresh air ventilation.
3. No ceiling fans or floor fans will be utilized in the building, rooms, or offices when more than one person is occupying the space.
4. As weather allows, during worship times, the facilities main entrance and exit doors will be propped open to improve ventilation and fresh air circulation. Windows in the Gathering Space also have the ability to be opened.

Drop-Off, Pick-Up, And Delivery Practices and Protocols

1. Any deliveries for Salem Church to the facility will be dropped off at the Church Office (Alley entrance) with minimal contact.
2. Whenever possible, attempts will be made to do everything electronically to eliminate the need for close contact with staff and delivery personnel.
3. Physical distance of 6 feet or greater will be maintained while receiving or exchanging deliveries.

B. CHURCH SERVICES, FUNERALS, AND WEDDINGS

Occupancy of The Sanctuary

1. The full occupancy of our sanctuary, including the balcony, is **261** persons, including the narthex and chancel area for the pastor. We will have a pastor, 4 ushers/guides, and 1 AV person (if possible) for each service. **With the physical distancing requirements of 6 feet, we can safely seat around 40 people on the main floor.** Although this is not our 50% occupancy of **130**, we cannot have 50% occupancy WHILE maintaining 6 feet distancing required by Minnesota COVID-19 Guidelines and within Fire Marshall Guidelines.
2. If needed 10 additional people could worship at physical distancing guidelines within the Gathering Space utilizing the closed-circuit TV.

Entering and Exiting the building

1. **Only the main doors under the portico are to be used on Sunday Mornings.**
2. When you enter the building, a guide will take your temperature. If you are found to have a temperature over 100.0, you will be asked to go home.
3. You may hang up your coat in the Foyer and then go directly upstairs using either the main staircase or the elevator. The second set of stairs will be closed. If needed, you may use the restroom downstairs.
4. Once upstairs you will be directed to the sanctuary. Please do not linger. An usher will lead you to your pew. Pews will be filled from the front first. Please sit where directed. This is to minimize cross contamination of aerosols.
5. A bulletin will be pre-placed in your seat.
6. Once the service has ended, an usher will dismiss you. We will dismiss from the back first, one pew at a time. Please wait patiently. This is to avoid groups of people forming. Once dismissed, please directly head to the exit. If you need to use the restroom, you may go downstairs.
7. The only restrooms open on Sunday mornings will be the ones in the Fellowship Hall. These may be accessed via the elevator or main stairs.
8. During the service, the doors, handrails, elevator buttons, etc will be sanitized by a guide. This should be sufficient to allow us to enter and exit the same doors. Please do not go into other areas of the building.

Service Time

1. Salem Lutheran Church will continue to have only one worship time at 9:00 am Sunday morning. Participants must pre-register by calling Pastor Erica, Vicki or signing up online. 30 people will be allowed at the service. (Pastor Erica, 2 guides, 2 ushers, and 25 participants) ***If we fail to secure 4 workers on any Sunday, the service will not be held.***
2. We will continue to provide video of our worship services online each week. We encourage those who cannot attend in person to worship with us in this way.
3. During worship, please do your best to keep your children seated and next to you. Children's worship bags will NOT be available, so bringing something from home to keep them occupied would be best. There will be no children's sermons.

4. Singing, chanting or group speaking are higher-risk activities, as it more forcefully expels respiratory droplets, so there will not be any singing or group speaking during the in-person worship services. The service will be spoken only. Some piano music will precede the service. There will be no singing or group speaking. The service should be about 30 minutes.
5. There will not be any hand shaking before, during or after the service. No processions (walking through the aisle before, during or after the service. And pastor will not be greeting people before or after the service.
6. Attendance will be taken at all services. This is to ensure proper contact tracing in the event of an exposure.

Ensure Sick Participants Stay Home

Participants are required to conduct a self-check and stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If you or anyone in your household has had any related symptoms over the last 4-5 days, stay home.

Physical (Social) Distancing - All Participants Must Be At Least Six Feet Apart

1. Flow of movement will be controlled from the designated entrance (main doors under the portico), through the foyer, up the elevator/stairs, through the narthex and into the Sanctuary, and to the designated exit (East side of the church building). A guide will be present to open the doors.
2. Taped six-foot marks will be placed on the floor of the facility throughout.
3. For each service conducted, there will be a 4-person team of ushers/guides that will control the flow of participants from when they enter to when they exit. They will ensure physical distancing throughout the facility. These guides are there to keep people safe. Please treat them with respect.
4. Once participants enter the facility they will not be allowed to linger in one spot. They will be ushered to the sanctuary and seated. When the service ends, participants will be ushered out. No lingering or fellowship in the Narthex or lobby areas will be allowed.
5. The only restrooms available for use on Sunday Mornings are in the basement. You may use the main stairs or elevator to access the lower level. Please observe the six-foot spacing marks. Only one person in each restroom at a time (1 male and 1 female)
6. Ushers will seat participants and ensure six feet of distance is maintained at all times. More detail on the logistics of the services is included in the usher duties section of this policy.
7. At this time, Holy Communion will not be conducted during the service. We will continue our Drive Thru Communion services on the 1st and 3rd Sundays.

Hygiene and Source Controls

1. Participants 5 years old and older are required to wear a face mask in the building at all times. We ask that you bring your own face mask however, the church will have on hand face masks for those who do not have one.
2. Ushers and Guides will be required to wear a face mask and gloves.
3. Participants are required to use hand sanitizer as they enter the building and are asked to regularly wash their hands. Hand sanitizer will be available in designated locations throughout the facility.
4. Tissue for proper cough/sneeze etiquette will be available in designated locations throughout the facility.
5. The offering plate will NOT be passed through the pews but stationed in the Narthex. Participants can drop off their offerings prior to exiting.

6. Hymnals, Bibles, and pew cushions have been removed from the pews to help alleviate surface contamination.
7. Service bulletins will NOT be reused. Please take those with you when you leave worship or leave them in your pew.
8. Children's worship bags located in the Narthex have been removed.
9. Community drinking fountains will be "out of order" and signage will be posted.

Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

1. The main entrances, sanctuary, balcony and bathrooms will be cleaned before and after any services. The following items will be sanitized before and after use:
 - Doorknobs/handles
 - Handrails
 - Elevator (buttons, doors)
 - Pews
 - Offering receptacles
 - Microphones
 - Musical equipment (piano, organ, etc)
 - Light switches

To minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitizing, the sanctuary will be accessible to the general public only for worship services.

2. An usher or guide will disinfect the restroom door handles and toilet seats after each use.

C. USING THE BUILDING OUTSIDE OF WORSHIP

1. The only areas accessible on Sunday Mornings are the foyer, elevator, Gathering Space (for flow), Narthex (for flow), Sanctuary, and lower restrooms. **ALL OTHER AREAS of the building are closed.** Closed areas will be marked off with signs and tape. Please do not enter these areas. This includes the church office and Fellowship Hall.
2. All meetings, groups, and activities must be approved by the Pastor, Church President, and/or COVID Task Force. The Pastor and Secretary must be aware of anyone who is in the building. This is to ensure proper sanitation.
3. All meetings, groups, and activities will have very specific guidelines which must be followed including (but not limited to) face coverings, handwashing, use of specific doors, rooms, areas, restrooms, etc. Each group, meeting, or activity is responsible for sanitizing the area(s) used. Supplies will be provided. No food or drink may be served at any group, meeting, or activity. Social distancing must be observed at all times.

D. ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOL

1. This document will be posted on site, on our website, sent out in the mail and electronically to the members of Salem Lutheran Church.
2. Signage will be posted at entrances, exits and throughout the facility outlining established protocols.
3. The designated entrance and exit will be posted.
4. Video links of our services will continue for those unable to attend in-person services.
5. Some spaces in the church building will remain sealed off to the public to minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitization. These areas will be marked.
6. Baptisms may be done on an arranged basis. Please contact the Church Office or Pastor with questions regarding this.

D. USHER/GUIDE DUTIES DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

- Guides and Ushers will play a key role during these restrictions and protocols that are required to have on-site services. We cannot conduct a service without you!!
- The Church Council and pastor will confirm that a 4-person team is lined up for each service.
- Please be present 30 minutes before the service begins.
- Each usher and guide will be required to wear a face mask and gloves.
- Designate one guide at the main entrance to take peoples temperatures and ask people to sanitize their hands as they enter. This person will open the door for ALL people. This will keep people from touching door handles.
- Designate one guide to be in the gathering space near the elevator and stairs. The rest of the Gathering Space will be blocked off. This person will keep people moving and discourage lingering.
- Designate one usher at the entrance to the sanctuary. This person will keep people moving and discourage lingering. They will stand near the offering plate and remind people to leave their offerings before/after the service.
- Designate one usher to seat/unseat people. They will lead people into the sanctuary and seat them. Seating will be every 3rd pew. Seating will be from the front to the back. One household per pew. For single households one person may sit on both ends of the pew. At the end of the service
- If we do have a visitor who wants to worship, do your best to accommodate them. They are a guest in our house and we want to meet their needs as best we can.
- During the service, two ushers/guides will remain in the narthex/gathering space sitting a minimum of 6 feet apart. If someone needs assistance or becomes ill, they will provide assistance as needed. If someone needs to use the restroom, one usher/guide will follow the person to sanitize all areas afterwards.
- At the end of the service, all guides/ushers will return to their places and resume their duties until all have exited the building.

During the Service

- We will not have acolytes for the services. Pastor will light the candles during the prelude music.
- Offering plates will NOT be passed around. The offering plate will be stationed in the Narthex for members to place their offering in the Narthex.
- Pastor will extinguish the candles during the postlude.

Following the Service

- After the service, designate one usher to usher people out of the sanctuary. One pew at a time, from back to front.
- Designate one usher to be stationed with the offering plate. The offering plate will be set up in the Narthex as they exit the sanctuary, members can place their offering just prior to exiting down the stairs to the East entrance. (People with specific needs can use the elevator and West door)
- Place offerings in bags and then in designated area

E. USE OF CHURH FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS:

1. Any organization wishing to use the facilities must submit a COVID-19 preparedness plan that is in alignment with the guidelines presented in the Salem Preparedness Plan. The plan for the event will be reviewed by the Church Council before any approval of the event.
2. If an event is approved, current building usage policies governing spaces will be followed.
3. The outside organization will be responsible for cleaning and sanitizing all areas that are used at the conclusion of the event.
4. The outside organization may be responsible for additional custodial fees for things like special set-up or cleaning.
5. The outside organization is responsible for ensuring social distancing per the guidelines presented earlier in this document.
6. The outside organization must provide hand sanitizer and utilize face-coverings.
7. The pastor or council member will be on site during the event to ensure the guidelines of this plan are followed.

This plan was approved by a vote of the Salem Lutheran Church Council on **15 September 2020.**