

ASCENSION LUTHERAN RETURN TO WORSHIP AND COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN (Revised 9/14/20)

Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ,

The past few months have seen massive, sweeping changes that affect our lives in countless ways. However, the one thing that has not changed is the Word of God and the love of Christ Jesus for all people. Amid all the challenges, changes, worries, and frustrations that our world has faced during this pandemic, our Lord Jesus still reigns on his throne, ruling over everything for the good of his Church. According to the mystery of his eternal plan, God is making all things in heaven and earth subject to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As followers of Christ we are called to love him by obeying what he commands, living out our faith as best and as clearly we can even when doing so gets messy and difficult. Therefore, in our response to this pandemic we've sought to:

- Follow the Third Commandment by providing opportunities for online worship, Bible study, and daily devotions so that believers can gladly hear and learn God's Word and meet for encouragement. We've also made it possible for members to receive pastoral care and private communion from pastor at their request.
- Honor the Fourth Commandment and Romans 13:1-7, which instruct us to honor and obey the authorities God has placed over us in the home, church, and government as each acts within its assigned role. We realize that this is a difficult time for our elected representatives at all levels--national, state, and local--who have been given a public and divine trust to maintain the safety of citizens. In keeping with the Eighth Commandment we want to guard and uphold the reputations of our leaders and take their words and actions in the kindest possible way while allowing time for the legislative, judicial, and executive laws and orders of our government to work themselves out in their regular way.
- Obey the Fifth Commandment, loving our neighbor by doing all we can to protect his/her body and life. This would include taking reasonable precautions and making appropriate modifications to what had been our regular worship practices and behavior for the sake of public health.
- Maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (cf. Ephesians 4:3) by respecting the consciences of fellow believers, knowing that people are on a wide spectrum of opinion on this chapter in our history (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:9-12). We have been reconciled to God and to each other by the blood of Christ and are called to live together in harmony as members of one body, sharers of one faith, with one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all. While many may feel it is safe for them to return to public worship, others may not feel safe doing so at this time. We want to refrain from passing judgment and continue to provide (safe) alternate avenues for serving their spiritual needs as we continue to grow and walk together in Christ.

We admit that faithfully balancing all these commands and principles of Scripture (while also dealing with information that is ever-changing, and subject to people's opinions and personal comfort levels) is an impossible task without the help of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to produce the fruit of faith, love, peace, and patience. We also confess that we will all need flexibility, patience, and mutual love as we walk together through this time towards the new normal.

OBJECTIVE

The goals of this communication are as follows:

- 1.) To put in place processes, guidelines, and suggestions so that our facility is clean and our interactions and worship practices reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- 2.) To inform you about exactly what to expect on our campus and during worship so that you can make what you feel is the best decision for you (and your family).

FACILITY AND USE MODIFICATIONS

- 1.) Hard surfaces of the narthex and sanctuary, along with common touch points (doorknobs, switches, etc.) will be cleaned and sanitized before each worship service (see checklists below).
- 2.) Weather permitting, the front doors and windows will remain propped open to increase circulation and air flow and reduce touchpoints.
- 3.) Restrooms will be cleaned before each service, but not during worship. For your convenience, sanitizing wipes will be available on the bathroom counter for you to use to avoid touching other surfaces--DO NOT FLUSH WIPES! Please follow good handwashing procedures when using the restroom, washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- 4.) The water fountain will not be available.
- 5.) The cry room and preschool rooms will not be accessible before, during, or after worship. If needed, parents are welcome to take their children into the narthex or kitchen area from which they can still see, hear, and participate in worship.

PERSONAL PRACTICES

- 1.) **Do not come to worship if you or others in your household are not feeling well, have a fever, or any of the other signs of COVID 19 (see [CDC symptoms and self-check for COVID-19](#)).** You are welcome to worship online and return when you are healthy again. Sunday morning services will be posted by 6 PM on Monday evening.
- 2.) **Those who are 65+ or have other pre-existing health conditions are encouraged to continue worshipping from home.**
- 3.) Please practice social distancing, maintaining 6 feet between you and others not of your household.
- 4.) Please refrain from physical contact (handshakes and hugs) with other worshippers (smiles are still OK!) and practice good handwashing and sanitizing procedures. Hand sanitizer and tissues will be available at either entrance to the sanctuary.
- 5.) **In compliance with the governor's orders we require the wearing of face coverings for indoor public gatherings unless you meet an exemption.** You may bring your own or we will provide a disposable facemask for you.
- 6.) If you would like to have a prolonged conversation with a brother or sister in Christ, please do so at a safe distance in the church parking lot before or after worship.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN WORSHIP

1. We will have two worship services at 8:30 and 10:15. Based on current guidelines our maximum capacity for each worship service is 67 persons or 18 family units/households. **In order to ensure that neither service exceeds these requirements we will send out a worship registration link via email, posted on the main page of our website, and in the "worship today" section of our app.** Select the service you would like to attend for the upcoming week and fill in your information. If both services should reach their capacity, we ask that you worship from home for that week. (The Sunday morning service will be posted by 6 pm Monday evening.) If you would prefer, you can also call the office at 763-559-0579, and we will register you for worship.
2. In order to reduce cross-traffic, we ask worshippers to enter in through the "new" doors on the south-most side of our facility and exit through the middle or north doors (see enter/exit diagram below). Upon entering the building please plan on being seated for worship.
3. For your convenience hand sanitizer stations, masks, and tissues will be available upon entering the building and on your way out.
4. Seating in the sanctuary will be every 3rd pew to ensure social distancing guidelines. Family units should sit together. "Unusable" pews will be taped off and marked with signs.
5. Paper bulletins will be available on the table to the left of the entryway. These provide an outline of the service and some announcements. The songs, readings, and responses appear on the screens at the front of church. If you take a paper bulletin please take it home with you.

6. Based on input from the congregation, **the worship committee and church council have decided to make the 8:30 service a service without live congregational singing and the 10:15 service a service where singing is encouraged (while wearing facemasks)**. Our goal here it to provide a reduced-risk environment for those who want/need extra precautions and also allow those who want to praise the Lord in song to do so.
7. All worship services will include some congregational speaking.
8. The duration of worship will be shortened to 45 minutes or less.
9. We will not collect an offering during worship. Please give electronically on our Ascension App or website or place your offerings in the plates provided upon entering or exiting the sanctuary.
10. Worship attendance will still be taken electronically online or via our app.
11. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper every 1st and 3rd Sundays. The elements will be individually apportioned before the worship service and members are welcome to come forward towards the center aisle to take their own bread and wine back to their seats so that everyone can commune together. Members are welcome to schedule private communion with the pastor at another time.
12. After worship pastor will make announcements and will excuse families one at a time through the "side door" leading to the main hallway, from which they can exit the building through the middle or north doors (see enter/exit diagram below). We encourage prolonged conversations to take place outside.

BIBLE STUDY AND SUNDAY SCHOOL AND FELLOWSHIP

1. Beginning September 13th we will have a shortened Bible-half hour (from 9:30-10:00) for Sunday school and in-person Bible Study.
2. All are welcome to attend our online Bible study on Wednesdays at 6:30 via Zoom. The video link and study guides are available on our website and app.
3. Sunday school children will go directly to their classrooms for study with their teachers.
4. For the time-being we will only serve individually packaged snacks outside, where we can fellowship at a safe distance.

IN CONCLUSION...

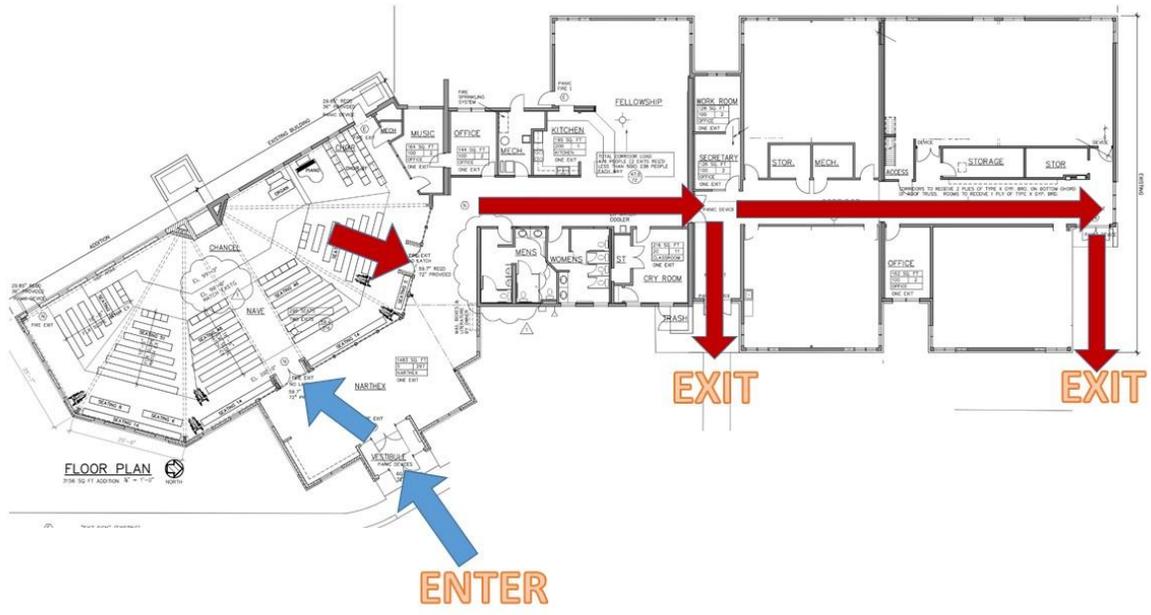
- If you desire to join us for in-person worship **please register online or by phone before coming to worship**. God bless you in that decision!
- If you desire to continue worshipping via our online services, the Sunday service will be posted on our website no later than 6 PM on Monday evening. God bless you in that decision.

Brothers and sisters, frankly this is new to all of us. We are all doing our best to serve our Ascension family. Our leadership is dedicated to taking these measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission during public worship, while also maintaining worship and study opportunities for any who prefer to worship from the safety of home.

We thank you for the love and patience that all of you have shown for the last two months. If you desire to talk about these issues, please contact Pastor Roloff (763-496-9172). May our Lord Jesus continue to bless our entire Ascension family and ministry for his glory, the spread of his gospel, and our good!

Yours in Christ - Pastor Brian Roloff & Ascension Church Council & Worship Committee

ENTER/EXIT and Traffic Flow



Ascension Lutheran Church

Job title: Volunteer Cleaner Covid 19 (Saturdays)

Last reviewed: June 1, 2020

Contact Person: Pastor Roloff/ Office Staff

General Responsibilities:

- Invest 1 – 1.5 hours of work, on Saturday, cleaning Ascension facilities.
- Monitor cleaning supply inventories and leave a note on the office desk when supplies are needed or when rags need to be washed.
- Identify minor maintenance items that are required and leave a note on the office desk with your name and number to contact you if there are further questions.

Specific Responsibilities

- **Sanctuary**
 - Pick up old bulletins, papers, crayons or other trash
 - Sweep altar and choir area
 - Vacuum floors
 - Wash glass walls and doors around sanctuary
 - Sanitize all hard surfaces of pews, and window ledges, window cranks
(DO NOT CLEAN THE PIANO)
- **Kitchen/ Fellowship Hall**
 - Empty garbage and replace bags
 - Vacuum and mop floor
 - Wash kitchen counter tops
- **Entryways/ Exits/ Narthex**
 - Vacuum carpet and mop bare floors
 - Wash glass walls and doors
 - Sanitize all door handles and panic bars, window cranks, and light switches
- **Restrooms**
 - Vacuum and mop floors
 - Clean sinks, toilets, urinals, dividers, doors, handles, mirrors and entry door handles
 - Stock toilet paper, hand towels, hand soap, Kleenex and feminine supplies
 - Empty trash and replace bags near sinks and in women's stalls

All cleaning supplies are in the tan metal cabinet located in the utility closet across from the restrooms. Two carpet vacuums, one bare floor vacuum, mops and buckets are in the same utility closet. Keys for the church doors will be hanging in the tan cleaning supply cabinet. You may pick one up a week or so before you come to clean. Please return the key to the cabinet after you clean. Make sure the lock on the main entrance has engaged when you leave the building. Thank you!

Saturday Cleaning Check List

Date: _____

Cleaner Name: _____ Cleaner Name: _____

Please date this sheet. Check off duties when completed.

Sanctuary

- ___ Pick up old bulletins, papers, crayons or other trash
 - ___ Sweep altar and choir area
 - ___ Vacuum floors
 - ___ Wash glass walls and doors around sanctuary
 - ___ Sanitize all hard surfaces of pews, and window ledges, window cranks
- (DO NOT CLEAN THE PIANO)**

Entryways/ Exits/ Narthex Halls and Entryways

- ___ Vacuum carpet and bare floors
- ___ Wash glass walls and doors
- ___ Sanitize all door handles and panic bars, window cranks, and light switches

Restrooms

- ___ Vacuum and mop floors
- ___ Clean sinks, toilets, urinals, dividers, doors, handles, mirrors and entry door handles
- ___ Stock toilet paper, hand towels, Kleenex
- ___ Empty trash and replace bags near sinks and in women's stalls

Kitchen/ Fellowship hall

- ___ Empty garbage and replace bags
- ___ Vacuum and mop floors
- ___ Wash & sanitize kitchen/fellowship area counter tops

Sunday (Between Service) Cleaning Check List

Date: _____

Cleaner Name: _____ Cleaner Name: _____

Please date this sheet. Check off duties when completed.

Sanctuary

- ___ Pick up old bulletins, papers, crayons or other trash
- ___ Wash glass walls and doors around sanctuary
- ___ Sanitize all hard surfaces of pews, and window ledges, window cranks
(DO NOT CLEAN THE PIANO)

Entryways/ Exits/ Narthex Halls and Entryways

- ___ Wash glass walls and doors
- ___ Sanitize all door handles and panic bars, window cranks, and light switches

Restrooms

- ___ Clean sinks, toilets, urinals, dividers, doors, handles, mirrors and entry door handles
- ___ Stock toilet paper, hand towels, Kleenex

Kitchen/ Fellowship hall

- ___ Wash & Sanitize kitchen/fellowship area counter tops