



First Evangelical Lutheran Church and School

~The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod~

"SHARING CHRIST, CHANGING LIVES"

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UPDATE (May 21, 2020)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

First Ev. Lutheran Church will resume Divine Services on Pentecost Sunday (May 31). Divine Service with Holy Communion will be held inside the church building at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Sunday School and Adult Bible Class will resume in the Fall.

Beginning on Holy Trinity Sunday (June 7), First Ev. Lutheran Church will have an indoor Divine Service with Holy Communion at 8 a.m. and an outdoor Divine Service at 10:30 a.m. The outdoor service will be on a trial basis.

The entire Minnesota South District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod has chosen to defy Gov. Tim Walz’s executive order, because the governor has not given churches a timeline or any other assurance that churches will soon be able to open. The District, along with the Minnesota North District of the LCMS, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) and the Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) have decided to move forward with Divine Services in a safe manner.

The Board of Deacons and Church Council have met to discuss what safety protocols First Ev. Lutheran Church would be putting in place in order to best comply with government regulations and suggestions, and in order to minimize the chances of anyone contracting COVID-19 at our Divine Services. We considered issues of reverence, sanitation and social distancing. We realize that some of the recommendations will be unpopular, but we ask everyone to bear with us as we attempt to navigate through these times. First Ev. Lutheran Church may review these protocols periodically and adjust them as needed.

Before the Divine Service:

- Please stay home if you are ill, or showing symptoms of COVID-19. Likewise, if someone in your household is ill, please stay home.
- Wash your hands often. Thorough hand-washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of diseases and illnesses.
- The sanctuary will be disinfected following each indoor Divine Service.

- Since the sanctuary has a capacity of more than 750 people, First Ev. Lutheran begin to hold both Divine Services at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., but we will hold capacity to 1/3 of the pews. Signage will be placed at the end of each pew on whether it is available or not.
- These protocols are available at the entrance stands to the sanctuary and on the church website.

Arriving for the Divine Service:

- Hand sanitizer will be available at the sanctuary entrances (donations welcome). If you have your own hand sanitizer, please use yours before using the church's, in order to save on costs.
- The entrance doors will be propped open until the Divine Service begins in order to enable touchless entry.
- You may wear a mask inside the building in consideration of your fellow congregants.
- Bulletins will be placed on the entrance stands.
- In order to maintain social distancing, signage will be placed on the pews on which pew is "open" for that particular Divine Service.

During the Divine Service:

- We will be singing hymns, since there is no proof that singing spreads COVID-19 or other diseases and illnesses. As Lutherans, we are a singing church.
- Tithes and Offerings will be placed on the offering plates at each entrance to the sanctuary. You may place your offering as you walk in or leave the sanctuary.
- The Children's Message will only be available on the church Facebook page during this time. Treats will still be available at the church.
- Although the pastors wash their hands prior to each Divine Service, the pastors will sanitize their hands immediately before the consecration and distribution of the Lord's Supper. The members of the altar guild and deacons will also have freshly washed hands.
- For the Sacrament of the Altar, ushers will dismiss groups of five from their pew to immediately proceed forward to be communed with Christ's very Body and very Blood for the forgiveness of sins and strength for our weak faith.
- There will be no blessing of children during the Lord's Supper. If possible, please have them remain in the pew when adults come forward to commune.
- The Holy Communion Dismissal Blessing will be spoken by the pastors following the Sacrament of the Altar.
- If you used a hymnal during the Divine Service, please place it on the pew following the service for cleaning.

After the Divine Service:

- The pastors will not be shaking hands with members and guests at the doors.
- Please do not shake hands, hug, or touch people in greeting, but do your best to maintain social distancing.
- Please do not congregate in the narthex and south entrance lobby, but rather go outside to briefly greet one another.

Outside the Divine Service:

- First Ev. Lutheran Church will continue with videos on the church Facebook page:
 - Morning Devotions and Songs with DCE Tori Kidd (Weekday mornings)
 - A Book of the Bible with Pastor Welch (Weekdays at 3 p.m. and weekends at noon)
 - Behind the Hymn with Pastor Adelsen (Wednesdays at 7 p.m.)
- Also please see the church Facebook page and church website for any updates from First Ev. Lutheran Church.
- All in-person group activities, including Sunday School and Adult Bible Class, will be postponed until the governor's executive order in limiting large gatherings is lifted.
- Please continue to pray for one another, for our congregation, and for the staff at First Ev. Lutheran Church.
- Also continue to pray for our governor, for our community and our state.

As Christians, we are called to obey God before all others. This, along with our deep need as sinners for the presence and grace of Christ for our eternal salvation, is why we are going to resume meeting for the Divine Service. It is important for everyone to know that our meeting is in direct violation to the governor's executive order. So, if you are not comfortable attending, the Facebook live-stream and local cable access recording will still be available. As it stands, until the governor allows large groups, we could, theoretically, be charged with a misdemeanor for attending the Divine Service and be fined. While we believe it is highly unlikely that this would happen, we want to be up front with these issues.

The Lord bless you and keep you always!

In Christ,

Pastor Dan Welch

Pastor Peter Adelsen

Les Engelmann, president
First Ev. Lutheran Church Council

Roger Schmidt, chairman
First Ev. Lutheran Church Board of Deacons