

# **COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for In-Person Worship**

## **Zion Lutheran Church of Warroad, MN**

(approved by council October 13, 2020)

This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan has been created to meet the requirement stated in the *Guidance of Gatherings: Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, and Ceremonies* from the Minnesota Department of Health (9/18/2020).

### **I. Communication of Preparedness Plan**

- A. Placed on Zion's website
- B. Included in Zion's e-newsletter
- C. Displayed in the Gathering Space

### **II. Screening of Attendees**

- A. All members, guests, and visitors are to stay home from worship services if they are sick with any symptom listed below.
- B. Each person is to conduct a self-screening prior to leaving home to come to worship services.
  - 1. If you have any of these symptoms, you must stay home: fever greater than 100.4, cough, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, chills, muscle pain, fatigue, severe headache, nasal congestion, or runny nose.
  - 2. If you have any concerns about symptoms, please contact LifeCare Medical Center Emergency Room at 463-2500.
- C. People who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 infection should strongly consider refraining from attending worship services. This includes:
  - 1. People who are over 65
  - 2. People of any age with underlying medical conditions
- D. Signage will be posted at the main entrance advising people with symptoms of COVID-19 or people that are at higher risk for COVID-19 infection to refrain from attending services.

### **III. Face Coverings**

- A. All attendees and participants are required to wear a face covering per MN Executive Order 20-81. Children age 5 and under are not required to wear a face covering.
- B. Attendees are encouraged to wear their own personal face coverings.
- C. A disposable face covering will be provided at the door for those who do not have one.
- D. If someone cannot wear a face covering due to a medical condition, a mental health condition, or a disability, they will be directed to worship in the Fellowship Hall.
- E. Musicians and worship participants may temporarily remove face coverings while they perform/read/preach.

#### **IV. Occupancy**

- A. Occupancy must be reduced to allow for the required social distancing of at least 6 feet between people who do not live in the same household.
- B. Occupancy must not exceed 50% of total capacity, which at Zion is 137.
- C. Individuals not a part of a household group must be separated by at least 6 feet
- D. Household groups must be separated from other household groups by at least 6 feet.
- E. Musicians must maintain 6 feet distancing between each other.
- F. All worship leaders must be separated from attendees by a distance of at least 12 feet.

#### **V. Entering the Church Building**

- A. All worshipers must enter through the main entrance.
- B. Ushers will indicate when attendees may enter to ensure that social distancing is maintained in the gathering space.
- C. Upon entering the building, all attendees will sanitize their hands.
  - 1. If a person is unable to use hand sanitizer, he/she will be directed to the restroom to wash their hands.
- D. Paper handouts including worship folders and The Messenger will not be available.
- E. On Communion Sundays, communion elements will be distributed prior to entering the sanctuary.
  - 1. Choice of elements include:
    - i. Wine with bread
    - ii. Juice with bread
    - iii. Wine with gluten-free bread
    - iv. Juice with gluten-free bread
- F. Please keep your coat with you, as the coatroom will not be available for use. This is due to the fact that social distancing must be maintained, which isn't possible in the coat room.

#### **VI. Entering the Sanctuary**

- A. Upon entering the sanctuary, offering plates will be available for those attendees wishing to place their offering in.
- B. Ushers will usher you to your seat.
  - 1. Attendees will be seated beginning in the front of the church.
  - 2. Every other pew will be used.
  - 3. Households will be seated together.
  - 4. Markings will be placed on each pew indicating where to sit.

#### **VII. During the Worship Service**

- A. Hymnals and Bibles will not be available during the worship service.
- B. Attendees are allowed to use a "whisper voice" while participating in the service.
- C. Attendees are allowed to sing using a "whisper voice."

- D. Attendees must wear a face covering at all times.
- E. There will be no “passing/sharing of the peace” during the service.
- F. Both sound booth attendants on a particular Sunday must be from the same household as 6 feet distancing is not possible.
- G. If anyone starts to cough during the worship service, they must leave immediately.
- H. Shared equipment such as microphones will be disinfected between users.

#### **VIII. Leaving the Sanctuary**

- A. Worshipers will be ushered out of the church.
- B. Ushering out will begin with the back pews.
- C. Ushers will dismiss people to allow for social distancing in the gathering space.
- D. When ushered out, worshipers are asked to leave the church building immediately. Please refrain from visiting.

#### **IX. Spaces Within the Church That Are Not Available on Sundays**

- A. Coat Room
- B. Nursery
- C. Fellowship Hall and Kitchen
- D. Sunday School Rooms (area beyond the bathrooms)

#### **X. Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols**

- A. All cleaning and disinfection protocols will be follow as stated in the CDC document entitled *CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home*.
- B. Zion will ensure that adequate cleaning supplies, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and tissues are available at all times.
- C. The sanctuary and other utilized areas will be cleaned and disinfected after each worship service.

#### **XI. Building Safety**

- A. Zion’s Property Community will ensure that the building is safe and properly maintained.
- B. Proper ventilation protocols will be followed.
  - 1. The annual HVAC system inspection was completed Fall 2020.
  - 2. Maintenance including replacement of air filters was completed Fall 2020.
- C. Sprinkler system and fire distinguishers will be properly maintained.
- D. Annual safety inspection was completed Fall 2020.

**NOTE:** If Roseau County data indicates a significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases, or if evidence of COVID-19 spread is associated to worship services at Zion, or if mandated by the State of Minnesota, Zion will cancel in-person worship services until it is safe to return. This decision will be made by Zion’s SMART Team along

with consultation from LifeCare Public Health and/or the Minnesota Department of Health.

## **Resources**

<https://www.elca.org/PublicHealth>

*-Considerations for Returning to In-person Worship*

<https://nwmnsynod.org/>

*-Questions to Ask Before Starting In-Door/In-Person Worship for the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA*

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/communities.html>

*-Guidance for Gatherings: Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship and Ceremonies*

*-Industry Guidance for Safely Reopening: Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals*

*-Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

*-Community and Faith-Based Organizations: Plan, Prepare and Respond*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html>

*-Checklist for Community and Faith Leaders*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/community-faith-based/faq.html>

*-FAQs for Administrators and Leaders at Community-and-Faith-Based Organizations*

If clarification is needed, please contact Deb Landin, RN, PHN, LSN at 242-2583.