



First Evangelical Lutheran Church Rush City, ELCA

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September 16, 2020

Dear People of First Lutheran,

After careful planning by the Church Council and worship leaders, we will resume worship in our sanctuary beginning September 20 at 9:00. For your convenience, the service will also be broadcast live on FM 96.5 into our parking lot. Planning is also underway to video livestream the service over the internet. In the meantime, a pre-recorded service will go live at our church's website every Sunday morning at 8:00. For those homebound without internet access, we will continue to mail you a weekly "Worship in the Home" resource.

As we look forward to gathering in-person, we are committed to following the guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health, and relevant executive orders requiring face coverings and limiting gathering size (in our case, 100 people). These practices are in effect during Minnesota's "Stay Safe: Phase 3" period and are subject to change depending upon the local case rate. Here is some basic information:

1. Face coverings over the nose and mouth must be worn while in the building. We have disposable masks available for your convenience. Exceptions are allowed for those with medical conditions and children under two years of age.
2. Please stagger your entrance by family group when entering the building.
3. Please do your best to stay six feet away from others outside your family group (about two arms' length).
4. Every other pew will be roped-off for proper distancing. Please use only the open pews. Once seated, remain in your place until the service is over.
5. All conversation will be encouraged outside the building.
6. During the service, there will be no singing except by our worship leaders who will be physically distanced from the rest of the congregation.
7. The Offering Basket will be placed near the sanctuary entrance where you may place your offering before or after the service. Those in the parking lot may deposit their offering by driving up to the church entrance at the end of the service (where Pastor Nathan can also greet you).
8. There will be no Communion until accommodations can be made to include those worshipping from home. We want a plan in place to include all those who previously attended worship but who for health or other hardship reasons have been unable to receive the sacrament. To do this, we will need volunteers who can help deliver the communion elements and/or speak a brief service and prayers over the phone or video call.
9. Ushers will dismiss everyone from worship, beginning with the back row.

All other regular church and associated activities inside the building still have a general limit of 10 people per event. All groups are required to add their gathering to the church calendar and record their attendance with the church office.

As a community of faith, our first concern is always the health and flourishing of human life. Those at high risk and/or with underlying health conditions are strongly encouraged to not attend worship in the sanctuary. Anyone participating in-person for any church event should conduct a self-check and stay home if they or a family member have symptoms of COVID-19: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste and smell, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Please let us know if you are sick or experiencing symptoms within 14 days of being in the church building. Pastor Nathan will keep your name confidential, unless you request otherwise.

If you have any further questions, we have prepared a complete COVID-19 Preparedness Plan as required by the state. This is a working document to which we invite your feedback and suggestions. The Plan includes more information about our ventilation system, building occupancy, and the criteria used for moving worship back to the parking lot or online. This plan is posted on our website and available in hard copy by request.

We are grateful to God that we can gather in-person in our sanctuary, but even more grateful that the church is not a building but a body. "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it," Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:27. Whether you gather inside with us or not, the Holy Spirit makes us one body through the word, through prayer, and in the many other ways we encourage each other and keep in touch throughout the week.

Thank you for patience as we developed this plan. We look forward to worshipping with you, whether in-person or in the Spirit.

In partnership with you,
First Evangelical Lutheran Church Council

Dennis Pederson, President
Mike Papke, Vice President
Nancy Schroeder, Treasurer
April Klar, Secretary

Glen Holmstrom
Anne Rood
Lainey Carlson
Keith Belau

Kevin Skogen
DeDe Swanson
Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity