



Our Saviour's Lutheran Church COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, with guidance from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), has formulated a plan of action to safely re-open our facilities 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 Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and the Minnesota Department of Health.

General Guidelines: As we re-open our church home for regular services, there are certain individuals for whom it might be best to remain home and continue to enjoy virtual 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 broadcast, streamed live on YouTube and conference call.
 - Anyone (staff or parishioner) 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.
 - Social distance guidelines of 6 feet will be observed throughout the church.
 - In compliance with the Governor Walz's order, all individuals are required to wear a face covering or mask while in the building with others. Masks will be available to those who do not arrive with one. Cloth face coverings are NOT a substitute for maintaining social distancing of 6 feet.
 - Our Saviour's Lutheran church will make every effort to enforce the guidelines put forth in this plan.
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Building and Occupancy: The guidelines below are designed to ensure all attendees at services are safe from the time they enter the building until the time they exit. Please review them carefully and adhere to them while in the building.

- Using formulas provided by the MN Department of Public Safety—State Fire Marshal Division, the occupant load of the main sanctuary has been determined to be 500 persons. Current

Department of Health guidelines (Phase 3 reopening) limit occupancy to no more than 50% of this amount to ensure social distancing. Therefore, a strict limit of 250 persons will be enforced at all gatherings (including staff and worship leaders).

- A designated individual will be responsible for counting all arrivals to the church and prevent attendance from exceeding limitations.
- A voluntary record of attendance will be kept for worship or other gatherings to help ensure information is available for contact tracing should this be necessary.
- Some spaces in the church will remain sealed off to the public to minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitization. These areas will be clearly marked and taped off.
- For all larger gatherings, separate entrance and exit points to and from the building will be maintained. These will be clearly labeled with appropriate signage. Care has been taken to ensure that those needing the elevator will still have access to it. Maps of traffic flow will be posted in several areas and will be indicated with taped arrows on the floor. (See [Diagram 1](#))
- Please avoid congregating at entrance points; stagger your entry into the building so as to maintain social distancing.
- Individuals should avoid congregating for conversation inside the church building. Such fellowship is welcomed outside the church building while maintaining social distancing.
- For larger gatherings, when possible, doors will be propped open to minimize contact with door handles/knobs. In other instances, door attendants may be used to open doors for attendees.
- Tape has been used to indicate seating areas in the sanctuary that maintain a minimum social distance of 6 feet. Every other pew will not be utilized and those that are will have alternating seating on both ends and in the center. (See [Diagram 2](#))
- The sanctuary of the church will be filled from front to back to prevent people from walking by others who may be seated along the aisles. The space will be emptied from back to front, again, to ensure social distancing. Those individuals with mobility concerns may request special arrangements.
- All persons should keep coats, hats and other personal items with them at all times. Coat and hat racks will not be used to reduce the number of things that need to be sanitized.
- No more than two persons should be in the restroom at the same time. Please avoid congregating by the restroom; maintain social distancing of 6 feet.
- Hand sanitizer will be made available throughout the church. All are encouraged to use it frequently when hand-washing is not an option.
- Gatherings shall be limited to regular services, weddings and funerals.

Worship Service Guidelines: The following 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. Social gatherings or celebrations (i.e. Fall Bazaar, potlucks, etc.) are still limited to 10 or fewer attendees.

- Hymnals have been removed from the pews to help alleviate surface contamination.
- Pew cushions have been removed to eliminate the need to deep clean each week after worship.
- There will be no singing during the worship service as studies have shown this to be a higher-risk activity that forcefully expels respiratory droplets into the air.

- Speaking in unison, as with the liturgy and prayers, will not be permitted. Worshipers may mouth the words silently; speaking them in their heart and mind.
- There will be no physical contact at any point during the service. The passing of the peace will occur but will be done without physical contact.
- There WILL be a children’s sermon, however children must remain in the pews with their family.
- There will be no passing of the collection plates. Offerings should be deposited in a receptacle as worshipers exit the sanctuary.
- Print copies of the bulletin will be placed in the pews prior to each service to minimize person-to-person contact.
- The projection system will continue to be utilized for the worship service.
- The service will continue to be broadcast as usual over Midco Cable access channel 6, streamed live on YouTube, and via conference call.
- Communion will not be conducted until such time as safety of this sacrament can be ensured.
- Baptisms may be done on an arranged basis. Please contact the church office with questions regarding this.

Sanitizing of Facilities: The following spaces and items in the church will be sanitized at least twice a week, once prior to services and once after each service.

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| • Doorknobs/handles and doors | • Offering receptacle (basket, box, etc.) |
| • Handrails | • Projection equipment |
| • Elevator (buttons, doors, etc.) | • Broadcasting equipment |
| • Handicap door entrance & exit buttons | • Sound equipment (controls, board, microphones, etc.) |
| • Light switches | • Musical equipment (pianos, organ, etc.) |
| • Bathrooms | |
| • Pews | |

To minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitation, the sanctuary will be accessible to the general public only on Sunday mornings (or any other worship times) with the exceptions of scheduled funerals and weddings.

Other spaces in the church will be cleaned and sanitized as per the normal schedule.

Heating and Cooling/HVAC: The heating and cooling system in the church building will remain on 24/7 to ensure maximum filtration of recirculated air. Filters in the system will be replaced on a regular schedule. Special effort will be made to ensure air does not blow across individuals. No floor or stand fans should be utilized in the building during events.

Use of Church Facilities by Outside Organizations: The church building may be used by outside entities for “essential events” as defined by the MN Department of Health (blood drives, etc.). Such events will be subject to the following conditions.

- Any organization wishing to use the facilities must submit a COVID-19 preparedness plan that is in alignment with the guidelines presented in the OSL Preparedness Plan. The plan for the event will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees before any approval of the event.
- If an event is approved, current building usage policies governing spaces (kitchen, dining hall, fireside room, etc.) will be followed. This includes rental and scheduling.
- The outside organization will be responsible for cleaning and sanitizing all areas that are used at the conclusion of the event.
- The outside organization may be responsible for additional custodial fees for things like special set-up, having staff on site, cleaning, etc.
- The outside organization is responsible for ensuring social distancing per the guidelines presented earlier in this document.
- The outside organization must provide hand sanitizer and have face-coverings available to those who wish to utilize them.
- A staff or council member of Our Saviour's Lutheran will be on site during the event to ensure the guidelines of this plan are followed.

Staff Guidelines: All staff members are expected to abide by the guidelines set forth in this plan and assist in the enforcement of them. Specifically, staff should:

- Not report to work if they are feeling ill or have any of the symptoms associated with Covid-19 (See list in [General Guidelines](#).)
- Practice social distancing of at least 6 feet when in the church building. They are required to utilize face masks when it is not possible to socially distance. They do not need to wear face coverings when they are alone at their workstation.
- Sanitize frequently used and shared equipment such as printers, keyboards, photocopiers, microphones, calculators, etc.
- Wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer when this is not possible.
- Wash hands thoroughly and sanitize work surfaces before assembling anything items for distribution to the public (bulletins, newsletters, communion supplies, worship materials, etc.)
- Report any concerns with the implementation of this plan to the Congregational President.

Resources Consulted in Preparation of this Plan:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Coronavirus (COVID-19) - www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Coronavirus – www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus

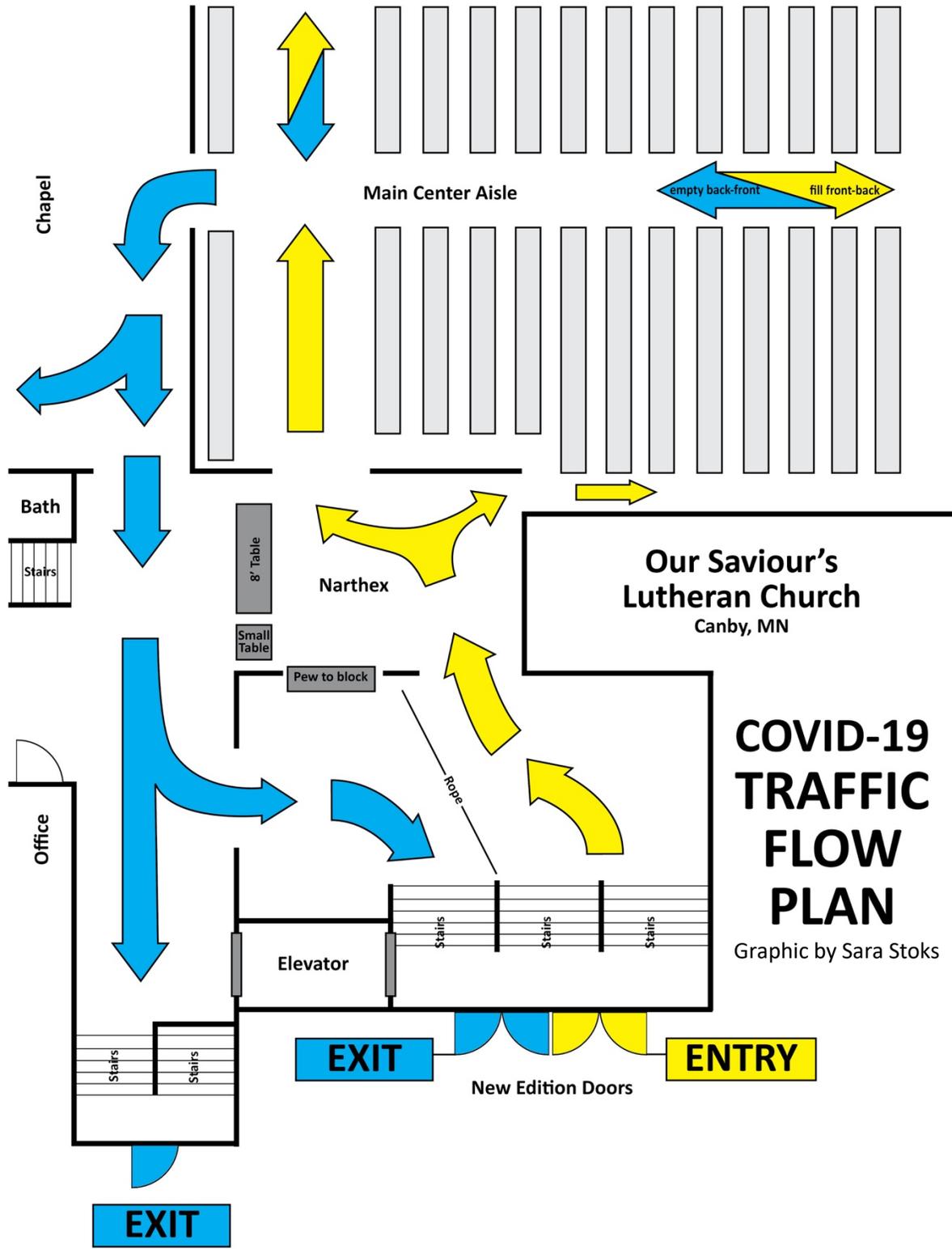
MDH: Community and Faith-based Organizations Guidance
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/communities.html>

MDH: Guidance for Faith-Based Communities Considering In-Person Services
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaithserv.pdf>

Resources to help leaders and members. -- <https://www.ELCA.org/PubicHealth>

This plan was approved by a vote of the OSL Council on June 14, 2020 and updated on 9-9-20 to reflect the statewide mask mandate.

Diagram 1: Traffic flow for entry to and exit of sanctuary



**COVID-19
TRAFFIC
FLOW
PLAN**
Graphic by Sara Stoks

Diagram 2: Seating plan for sanctuary designed to ensure social distancing during worship

