

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church

Cokato, MN

Developed May 26, 2020, by the Church Council in accordance with guidelines developed by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

“Staff” refers to pastors, the secretary, janitors, and others who work at the church (not the entire congregation).

“Participants” refers to the entire congregation.

The Plan Administrator is Mike Berg.

STAFF PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

Ensure Sick Staff Stay Home

1. Staff will enter the building only if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms (fever of 100.4 or higher, chills, new cough, shortness of breath, new sore throat, new muscle aches, new headache, new loss of smell or taste) and have not tested positive for COVID-19.
2. Staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home immediately. Staff who have been in close contact with a household member with COVID-19 should not be in the church until their quarantine period is finished.
 - Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
3. If a staff member is exposed to COVID-19, the exposed person will notify the Plan Administrator, and the Plan Administrator will notify the other staff to inform them.
4. The Plan Administrator will maintain communication with and gather information from staff who may be ill, to ensure the privacy of staff is maintained.
5. Any staff who are sick with COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 will report to the Plan Administrator immediately.
6. Staff who were sick with COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive may only return to church after following current MDH guidelines. Prior to any ill staff returning to the church, they will reference and follow the “COVID-19 and When to Return to Work” guideline. A copy of this form will be given to each staff member upon implementation of this Preparedness Plan.
7. The Plan Administrator will discuss which staff the ill staff member had contact with in the previous 7 days in order to determine which staff have been exposed.
8. Any staff member who is sick will not enter the church building until after their period of isolation has ended. If working is necessary, working remotely is the only option.
9. All “at risk” staff and members of vulnerable populations are encouraged to stay home and participate in services remotely. These staff should stay home whenever possible and take particular care to reduce their risk of exposure.
10. Sick-leave time/time-off will be extended to accommodate the Return to Work guidelines.

Social Distancing – Staff Must Be At Least Six Feet Apart

1. Remote working is recommended for all staff to reduce the risk of exposure.
2. Since there are no designated “shifts” for any staff at the church, it is strongly encouraged that staff attempt to do their work when only a few other staff are at the church.
3. Staff are encouraged to come and go from the building without contact with other staff (do not “cross paths”), so as to avoid exposure.
4. Staff meetings will be limited to 10 people or fewer.
5. Staff are encouraged to use the bathroom only one person at a time, in order to maintain social distancing.
6. If two or more staff need to work together, they will work in an area of the church that allows for social distancing (i.e., the fellowship hall).
7. Six feet of physical space will be maintained between staff and the public whenever interacting.

Staff Hygiene and Source Controls

1. Staff will regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitizer while in the church building. The kitchen and bathrooms will be available for handwashing, and hand sanitizer will be readily available throughout the building.
2. Non-medical face coverings, gloves, and disinfectant will be available for staff to use.
3. “Hand-washing” and “Cover Your Cough” signs will be posted in all bathrooms.
4. Staff will wear face masks when 6 feet of space cannot be maintained, or when working on projects with others for extended periods of time.
5. Trash cans will be placed by bathroom doors to ensure a paper towel can be disposed of when operating the door.
6. The drinking fountain will not be used.
7. Food will not be shared communally.
8. Facial tissues will be available throughout the church to allow for proper cough/sneeze etiquette, and no-touch trash cans will be available.

BUILDING AND VENTILATION PROTOCOLS

General Building Conditions: The church building will be assessed to determine the status and capacities of the utility systems within the building (e.g. ventilation, water-supply, sewer, gas), as well as potential issues associated with vermin, molds, and mildew, prior to putting the building into an operational status.

1. Follow established protocols for starting mechanical, electrical, plumbing, life-safety, and other systems after non-use.
2. Assess the building for indications of pest and vermin infestation, and consult a pest-control professional as appropriate.
3. Staff will refer to the CDC’s Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation.
4. Windows, fans, and air conditioning: CDC recommends working with facility management to determine how often to change air filters and to improve ventilation and exchanges for air from outside to the extent possible.

Day-To-Day Operations: Once systems are in a safe operational status, ensure the following practices and protocols are maintained:

1. Continuously maximize fresh air into the work and communal spaces. Eliminate air recirculation. As much as possible, windows will be open for ventilation.
2. Minimize airflow from blowing across people.
3. In regards to the air conditioning system:
 - a. Supplement ventilation system with the use of portable HEPA filter units whenever possible.
 - b. Keep systems running longer hours (24/7 if possible) to enhance the ability to filter contaminants out of the air.
5. If you have the capacity to do so, the following is also recommended:
 - a. Maintain relative humidity levels of RH 40-60%.
 - b. Add a flush cycle to the controls of the HVAC system, and run HVAC systems for 2 hours before and after occupancy if your system allows for this.
 - c. Check and rebalance the HVAC system to provide negative air pressure whenever possible.
 - d. Consult an HVAC professional or the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers to ensure proper ventilation is provided, and ventilation systems are properly maintained. See ASHRAE's COVID-19 Preparedness Resources (<https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources>).

DROP-OFF, PICK-UP, AND DELIVERY PRACTICES AND PROTOCOL

1. Deliveries will be received via a contactless method whenever possible.
2. Deliveries will be at the "Office Door" as much as possible.
3. Staff must maintain a distance of 6 feet or greater from others during interactions while receiving or exchanging deliveries.
4. Staff must minimize the unnecessary exchange of sharing of scanners, pens, or other tools with delivery personnel.

WORK AND GATHERING SPACE CLEANING AND DISINFECTION PROTOCOLS

1. Prior to leaving the church building, staff will sanitize their work station with disinfecting wipes or a disinfecting cleaner.
2. All offices, restrooms, common areas, and controls will be cleaned and disinfected at least weekly.
3. Light switches will not be sanitized with a sprayable liquid agent. Disinfecting wipes, or a liquid agent damply on a rag, will be used on light switches.
4. Personal equipment, microphones, phones, and communion cups should not be shared. If they are shared, they will be disinfected after each use.
5. At least weekly and between gatherings, high-touch items will be cleaned: doorknobs, countertops, railings, handles, ends and tops of pews, tops of chairs in the fellowship hall, and any other high-touch items.
6. If it becomes known that a person who was at church becomes ill with COVID-19, cleaning and disinfecting of the work and gathering space will take place immediately, according to the CDC guidelines.

7. Cleaning and disinfecting products will be chosen based on effectiveness and safety.
8. Anyone using cleaning or disinfecting products will review product labels, follow manufacturer specifications, and use required personal protective equipment for the product.
9. Hymnals and Bibles will be removed from the pews as they cannot be effectively cleaned. Pens will also be removed in order to reduce the risk of transmission.
 - a. In lieu of hymnals, the projector screen will be used to guide participants through the texts of the service and the songs.
 - b. In lieu of Bibles, participants are encouraged to bring their own Bibles to follow along during the services.
 - c. Bulletins will be available for participants to pick up from the table in the entryway. Bulletins will not be reused.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING PRACTICES AND PROTOCOL

1. All leadership and staff will be trained regarding COVID-19 exposure, as well as applicable policies, procedures, practices, and protocols.
2. This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan will be available on the Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church's website, and a physical copy will be posted on the bulletin board in the entryway. The Plan will be reviewed by all staff.
3. These rules and practices will be communicated to all staff and to anyone who uses the church's physical space (e.g. community groups, funerals, etc).
4. Staff will comply with and follow established rules and practices.
5. Communication will take place to educate participants about the steps being taken for their protection against COVID-19.

WHAT ORGANIZATIONS AND FACILITIES CAN DO TO MINIMIZE POSSIBLE TRANSMISSION

1. Participants should conduct a self-check and stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
2. Participants must not attend services if they had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or quarantined case, or had recent out of continent travel.
3. Persons who are at higher risk for severe illness are strongly encouraged to stay home. Current CDC guidelines recognize these groups as higher-risk:
 - a. People over the age of 65
 - b. People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
 - c. People who have serious underlying medical conditions:
 - i. Asthma (moderate to severe)
 - ii. Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
 - iii. Chronic lung disease
 - iv. Diabetes
 - v. Hemoglobin disorders
 - vi. Immunocompromised

- vii. Liver disease
 - viii. Serious heart condition
 - ix. Severe obesity
4. Signs will be posted to communicate with participants that if they do not feel well or have symptoms of COVID-19, they should stay home.
 5. Participants should stay home if they have a household member experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
 6. If a participant begins to feel unwell while in the church, they should leave immediately and isolate themselves at home or seek medical attention.
 7. Participants will regularly wash and/or sanitize their hands.
 8. Equipment, products, and items touched by participants while in the church will be limited.
 9. Participants are encouraged to wear a face covering or mask when they are able. Extra masks will be available for people who do not arrive with one. Even with the use of face coverings or masks, a distance of 6 feet will be maintained whenever possible.
 10. Singing during the service will continue. Participants will be spaced by households throughout the sanctuary and fellowship hall.
 11. Processionals and recessionals will only be done in a manner that maintains at least 6 feet of distance between people from different households.
 12. The offering plates will be in stationary locations throughout the sanctuary, rather than being passed during the service.
 13. Communion will be offered at least monthly to participants, with the following practices in place:
 - a. Distributors of the elements will use hand sanitizer prior to initiation and will wear gloves and face coverings during distribution
 - b. The participants will be ushered to the front of the church, spaced 6 feet apart according to household, in one line to receive the elements.
 - c. After the service, participants will dispose of their own cups in trash cans that are available at the back of the sanctuary.
 - d. There will be no singing during communion.
 14. A distance of at least 6 feet from people not in the same household will be maintained at all times. Seating in the sanctuary and fellowship hall will be utilized to maintain this distance.
 15. Participants will be ushered out of the sanctuary at the end of the service to maintain appropriate distancing between households.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

1. Some staff and participants may be at higher risk for COVID-19, and they are strongly encouraged to stay at home and not participate in any group gatherings involving people outside of their immediate household.
2. The worship services (and perhaps other gatherings, to be determined at a later date) will continue to be live-streamed so that people who choose to stay home may remain connected to the church body.
3. Our church will resume in-person Sunday worship services on May 31, 2020, according to this Preparedness Plan. Anyone who chooses to continue to stay at home will be respected by the church and its participants and will have no negative consequences from the church because of their decision.
4. There will be no nursery care available at this time.
5. All unnecessary rooms of the church will be locked.

6. It is acknowledged that even with these steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in place, the virus can still spread in large group gatherings.

OCCUPANCY LIMITS

1. Occupancy will be reduced in order to accommodate the required social distancing of at least 6 feet between people of different households.
2. In indoor settings, occupancy will not exceed 25% of the total occupancy as determined by the fire marshal. This is 182 people total - 78 people in the sanctuary and 104 in the fellowship hall. Outdoor gatherings must not exceed 250 people.
3. When entering or exiting the church, participants of different households must maintain a distance of at least 6 feet.
4. Occupancy totals include leadership, staff, and all participants.
5. These limits may change as the data indicates declining numbers of cases and deaths or surges in those numbers over time.

ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOL FOR MANAGING OCCUPANCY

1. This Preparedness Plan will be available on the church website and posted in the entryway of the church so that all current and potential participants are aware of expectations.
2. Prior to services beginning on May 31, 2020, participants will be notified of the added COVID-19 precautions that will be taken.
3. Prior to each service, participants will need to assess their symptoms and symptoms of everyone in their household, and if anyone has symptoms of COVID-19, not attend services.
4. Signs will be posted at the entrance/exit outlining this Preparedness Plan.
5. If maximum capacity is reached and more people arrive, ushers will turn them away and encourage them to participate remotely via the church's website.
6. Staff will be attentive to the health of those attending services. If anyone appears to be ill with COVID-19 symptoms, a staff member will ask that participant and their household to go home or seek medical attention.
7. Hand sanitizer and facial tissues will be available at the entrance, in the sanctuary, in the fellowship hall, and at other locations throughout the church.
8. Only one household will be allowed in the bathrooms at a time, in order to allow for appropriate distancing.
9. Only members of the same household can sit together in the pews.
10. Participants from separate households should not interact from closer than 6 feet before, during, or after services.