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## Introductory Statement

*The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd is committed to living out the unconditional love and radical hospitality of Jesus in our Worship, in our Service to the World, and in our Shared Life.*

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 has impacted our public health, economic stability and mental (emotional) health. It has disrupted our accustomed ways of functioning as a congregation. Many of us lament having not been able to gather in the church building this past year for worship and other ministry activities. In any decision making related to our life as a congregation, our first priority must be the health and safety of our members as well as others in the community. We are now confident we can return to worship in our sanctuary and do so safely.

The LCGS COVID-19 Task Force was created by the Congregation Council and charged with the task of creating policy and making recommendations for best practices, including when, how, and under what conditions our congregation will move from no in person gatherings to modified gatherings within the church building. Those policies and recommendations are established taking into account information and recommendations from the CDC, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the ELCA, and the Lower Susquehanna Synod. The Task Force consists of Helen Book, Melanie Martinez, John Walling and co-chairs Rod Schoening and Bruce Schreiter. Pastor Russell is providing staff support.

COVID-19 pandemic conditions across Lancaster County and Pennsylvania have been improving. The use of masks, social distancing, improved hygiene practices, and the availability of vaccines have all helped to reduce the spread of the virus. These conditions have allowed LCGS to relax many of our guidelines regarding our worship and gathering practices.

It is the responsibility of our church leaders to provide a safe environment for all our members and guests. We will not be aware, nor will we ask, about a person's vaccination status or underlying health conditions. Therefore we request that all unvaccinated persons wear a mask.

The COVID-19 Task Force is preparing plans for LCGS to return to worship indoors in our nave on Sunday August 1, 2021.

## Key Facts About COVID-19

**Spread:** The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 primarily spreads person-to-person by respiratory droplets when a person coughs, sneezes, sings or shouts. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet or 2 arms lengths but much farther with singing and shouting).

**Symptom onset:** Symptoms generally appear 2-10 days, but as long as 14 days, after exposure to the virus. During the up to 2-week period before symptoms appear, infected individuals may still spread the virus (i.e., asymptomatic spread). This fact is the impetus for social distancing and wearing masks as a main strategy for reducing risk.

**Symptoms:** Symptoms can include, but are not limited to, fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

**Diagnosis:** At this time, there are two types of tests for COVID-19: diagnostic tests and antibody blood tests. Antibody tests have been problematic, due to many false positive and false negative tests. Labs are working on better standardized tests for antibodies currently.

The following guidance is not exhaustive. It is our hope that the information contained in this document will help prevent exposures to COVID-19 through church related activities.

### **A Key Equation to Keep in Mind**

$$\text{COVID-19 Infection} = \text{Exposure to Virus} \times \text{Time}$$

The longer you stay in an environment that may contain the virus, the higher the risk of getting sick.

- People get infected when they are exposed to a certain number of viral particles. Coughing sneezing and singing releases a large number of virus particles into the air, but an infected person talking or even just breathing can still release some virus into the air, and over a long period of time in an enclosed space, could still infect others.
- If you get a high level of exposure, it is a short time to infection; if you get a low level of exposure, it takes a longer time before you become infected.

## **Worship and Sacramental Practice Guidance**

The Coronavirus has presented challenges to in-person worship. We are now confident we can return to worship in our sanctuary and do so safely. It has been established that the virus spreads person-to-person by respiratory droplets. We will not be aware, nor will we ask, about a person's vaccination status or underlying health conditions. Therefore we request that all unvaccinated persons wear a mask. The practice of social distancing in household groups, and refraining from singing will continue.

The intimate nature of the Eucharist poses a challenge. Our Pastors are working to establish necessary safety measures so that we can return to celebrating the Eucharist together. Additionally, the needs for sanitization in any part of the building utilized, must also be established.

We remain committed to continuing to worship together in ways that feed us in faith while keeping us safe.

### **Timing Relating to Resuming Indoor, In-person Gatherings**

The safest time for in-person gatherings in the physical church building is when the following criteria are met:

- o There must be sustained rates of low infection in Lancaster county. There has been a downward trend in the number of new COVID-19 cases in our state and county as reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (as of May 30, 2021).
- o There should be a downward trend in the number of COVID-19 cases in our local hospitals.
- o There must be increased rates of vaccination among all eligible persons in our community.

The COVID-19 Task Force believes the above criteria has been met. We are preparing plans for LCGS to return to worship indoors in our nave on Sunday August 1, 2021.

LCGS will continue to follow CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidelines for Best Practices to resume indoor, in person gatherings.

## FACILITY AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

It is critical that LCGS has a clear facilities management plan prior to moving to in person worship in our building. The developed plan will be revisited periodically to ensure that current guidelines are included. Below are guidelines we will follow as we move to in-person worship.

- Initially as we return, LCGS will limit the use of church facilities to Worship only. We will continue to conduct ministry online as much as possible including Congregation Council and other ministry meetings.
- We may limit the size of attendance at our services to insure we provide at least 6-foot social distancing between each household unit. All seating arrangements will comply with CDC recommendations for social distancing and hygiene.
- Ushers will help direct people to seating areas. We ask that once seated, people refrain from any unnecessary movement to other seating areas.
- LCGS will encourage congregation members to be vaccinated. This will ensure a safer experience for all as we return to gathering together.
- We request that all unvaccinated persons wear a mask. Again, our goal is to keep everyone safe from any potential asymptomatic spread.
- We are requesting that hugs, handshakes, fist bumps, etc. not be done at this time. Wave a hello to friends and other church members.
- At this time childcare in the nursery will be suspended. This will resume only when it is safe to do so.
- Any member, staff, or guest should stay at home if they are symptomatic, have fever, or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Any member of the congregation participating in in-person worship who tests positive for COVID-19 is asked to have a confidential conversation with one of the Pastors in a timely fashion regarding this information.

## **PHASE 1 (Preparing to Return to In-Person Worship)**

### **Online Worship**

We are providing a recorded Service of the Word online each weekend and are holding no in-person services. Recording (as opposed to live streaming) allows people to participate in the service at a time of their convenience, allows us to work around internet service issues, and ensures the safety of staff and assisting ministers providing leadership, as they can record separately. It also allows us to more easily incorporate resources from the broader church.

### **Outdoor Communion**

In addition to weekly online worship, we plan to continue to hold outdoor, in-person services of Holy Communion in our parking lot. A service will also be recorded and posted online those weekends so those in our more vulnerable demographic can worship from the safety of their homes. Worshippers are asked to arrive fifteen minutes prior to the start of the service, but no earlier. They should enter the parking lot off of Greenfield Road using the one-way entrance closest to Pitney Road, drive past the Good Shepherd statue, and stop at the left front corner of the building where offering will be received, and a bulletin and communion wafer(s) will be handed to them through the front passenger window. Wine will not be used. The service will be brief, as it is safer not to gather for an extended period of time.

We invite parishioners to bring lawn chairs to participate in the service outside of their car. Those who bring lawn chairs will be directed as to where to park. They can then set up their chairs in a designated area, grouped by households and maintaining 6 feet or more from the next person or group. Those who wish to remain in their car for worship will proceed to a designated space at the direction of a parking lot usher in a yellow vest. (If it is raining all will remain in their cars.) Worshippers must practice social distancing throughout. We request that all unvaccinated persons wear a mask all times if outside of your own vehicle.

### **Festivals**

We will continue to find ways to bring people to visit outside of the church, connect with the Pastor(s), mark special liturgical days (e.g., with a flower display at Easter and Pentecost), and receive meaningful items (e.g., Palms on Palm Sunday).

### **At-Home Devotionals**

We will continue providing material to guide and support the prayer life of members.

### **Online Devotionals**

We will continue to provide online devotionals, including Evening Prayer.

## **Prayer Walk**

A Prayer Walk and labyrinth have been constructed on the church's property to provide a self-guided outdoor devotional activity for members, neighbors, and anyone else who will find it helpful.

## **Baptisms**

Baptisms will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## **Weddings**

Weddings are currently not being scheduled in the church building itself. The Pastor(s) would consider presiding at a small, socially-distant wedding of immediate family only that was held in a private backyard or other similar setting.

Once completion of an outdoor altar area has taken place, small, socially-distant weddings of up to 25 people can be held on the concrete pad. The possibility also exists of erecting a tent on the property nearer the parking area for a small wedding. In either case, the couple may want to arrange for the rental of a porta potty, as the building remains closed.

## **Funerals**

All funerals during this time should be invitation only, so as to limit the number of those participating. No funeral services are taking place in the church building during this phase. A spoken service for immediate family only, maximum of ten participating, can be held in the church's Memorial Garden. The Pastor(s) are willing to preside at small funerals taking place in a funeral home setting or at a graveside. No funeral luncheons should be held at this time.

## **Phase 1: Action Steps**

The following are actions LCGS will complete prior to reopening. These actions are designed to ensure LCGS takes precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

LCGS cannot reopen until it has completed certain preparations, including:

- Review the reopening standards established by the ELCA, Susquehanna Synod, local municipalities, Pennsylvania Department of Health, and recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- Provide training for all persons who are responsible for planning, implementing, and managing our church reopening.
- Remove and store all pew Bibles, hymnals, envelopes, visitor cards, etc.
- Establish and/or adopt a cleaning and sanitizing protocol.
- Ensure proper PPE and cleaning supplies are readily available.
- Assign clear roles and responsibilities during the times the church will be open.

Updated July 30, 2021

- Deep clean and sanitize the church facilities with attention to the sanctuary, offices, fellowship areas, restrooms, door knobs/handles, etc. Areas used by children will be cleaned, however these areas will not be in use during initial reopening.
- Open and run all faucets for at least five (5) minutes and all flush toilets to allow any stagnant water that may be in the pipes to flow out.
- Evaluate and repair as needed, HVAC systems to make sure every area in the church has proper ventilation. Increase the frequency of maintenance and filter changes
- Create and display signs and posters related to required face covering, social/ physical distancing practices and other pertinent information relative to our effort to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Post signs about proper hand washing in all restrooms. Other areas (nursery, kitchen, sacristy) will be posted as these areas are opened for use.
- Plan to manage the flow of members into and out of the worship space. Ushers will assist with this. We expect to dismiss by rows or sections and will request members proceed directly to their vehicles.
- Visibly delineate proper social distancing (at least 6 feet apart) for space to be used for worship.
- Lock and/or block off all spaces that will be restricted or not used during the initial re- entry phases including offices, nurseries, classrooms, kitchens, pantries, restrooms, and balconies.
  - Restriction waiver for offices, choir loft and music room areas:
    - Current office staff and volunteers needed for day-to-day business and production of worship events.
    - All CDC safety guidelines must be practiced at all times.
  - Restriction waiver for kitchen:
    - Grace Meals only.
      - No more than four people in the kitchen.
      - All CDC safety guidelines must be practiced at all times including masks, distancing, and hand washing.
      - All ServSafe requirements must be met.
      - Proper cleaning must occur after each use of the kitchen.
- The two main restrooms and the ADA restroom will be open during the initial re-entry phase, all others will remain closed. A cleaning schedule for restrooms will be developed

## **PHASE 2 (Limited In-Person Indoor Worship)**

### **Online Worship**

Even when we are able to return to limited in-person worship in our building, it will be important for us to continue providing an online worship option, recognizing that some of those worshipping with us now can't or won't join us in person, but will need or want to continue to engage from the safety of their homes.

### **In-Person Worship**

In-person worship will only take place once all is in place to do so safely, including the establishing and communicating of all protocols, training of those who will have any responsibility related to it, posting of signage, placing of hand sanitizer stations, and limiting the parts of the building to be accessed by locking or blocking off the parts that are not to be accessed.

We will not know the vaccination status of all persons attending worship. We request that all unvaccinated persons wear a mask.

People will be spaced at 6-foot intervals, making allowances for households to sit together. Once the nave has reached capacity, newcomers will be asked to sit in All Saints Hall, which will have a sound and video link to the nave.

These brief, in-person worship services will include Holy Communion, served in a safe, contactless manner. No common cup will be used; wine will be served using individual glasses. The bulletin will contain all that is needed for the service; no hymnals will be present.

Congregational responses will be limited to avoid the forceful expelling of air into the room and there will be no congregational singing. Participants will remain stationary for the peace and will be asked to wave rather than to call out to one another. No nursery will be provided. The Shepherd's Crook Café will be closed, with no coffee available or social time possible.

Participants will be asked to arrive no more than fifteen minutes prior to the start of the service and leave promptly once the service has ended. Socially distanced visiting will be available in the parking lot. CDC-standard cleaning and sanitization will occur after each worship service.

### **Festivals**

We will continue to evaluate how to mark special liturgical days safely.

### **At-Home and Online Devotionals**

We will continue providing material to guide and support the prayer life of members.

## **Prayer Walk**

A Prayer Walk and labyrinth have been constructed on the church's property to provide a self-guided outdoor devotional activity for members, neighbors, and anyone else who will find it helpful.

## **Baptisms**

Baptisms may be celebrated within or outside of a worship service, at the discretion of the Pastor(s).

## **Weddings**

For any wedding that takes place at the church, the wedding party must arrive dressed. The Pastor(s) will also consider presiding at small, socially-distant weddings of immediate family only that are held at the church's outdoor altar area, or in a private backyard or other similar setting. No wedding receptions will be held in the church.

## **Funerals**

All funerals during this time should still be by invitation only, so as to limit the number of those participating to 100 or fewer. Services taking place in the church's Memorial Garden should be limited to no more than 15 people. The Pastor(s) are also willing to preside at small funerals taking place in a funeral home setting or at a graveside. No funeral luncheons will be held in the church at this time.

## **Other Ministries**

Other ministry meetings will continue to take place online or in outdoor settings if practical. If all adults in a party are vaccinated, limited in-person meetings may take place in the building. Unvaccinated children must wear a mask if in the building. Groups will be assigned a meeting space based on capacity, availability, and the cleaning scheduled. Meeting spaces will include the Martin Luther Room, Shepherd's Crook Café, the Family Room, Good Shepherd Room, St. Mark Room, St. Luke Room, and All Saints Hall. To ensure safety for all, the group leader will be expected to submit a plan to the COVID-19 Task Force for approval, outlining safety procedures/practices well in advance of publicizing the event.

## **No Outside Groups**

For the time being, with no Facilities Use Coordinator and only vaccinated people allowed in the building for anything other than worship, the building is only available to congregational groups with an approved plan.

## **Phase 2: Action Steps**

When LCGS is prepared to reopen, we will:

- Review church facilities management plans and make any adjustments based on the most current COVID-19 mitigation levels in our community.

*Updated July 30, 2021*

- Communicate reopening plans and requirements using multiple methods (e.g., email, postal mail, text messaging, phone calls, etc.) to inform members at least 3 weeks before the facilities are scheduled to reopen.
- Continue to offer worship opportunities online.
- LCGS will encourage congregation members to be vaccinated. This will ensure a safer experience for all as we return to gathering together.
- We will not know the vaccination status of all persons attending worship. Therefore, we request that all unvaccinated persons wear a mask.
- We request our members or guests stay at home if they are considered at increased risk, symptomatic, have a fever or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Sanitize all high-traffic/high-touch areas (restrooms, doorknobs, counters, seats, etc.)
- Provide a new, disposable face mask upon request.
- Restrict access to offices, nurseries, classrooms, kitchens, and balconies. Lock or block off these areas.
  - Current office staff and volunteers needed for day-to-day business and production of worship events.
  - All CDC safety guidelines must be practiced at all times.
- Use of kitchen:
  - No more than 6-8 people in the kitchen.
  - All CDC safety guidelines must be practiced at all times including masks, distancing, and hand washing.
  - All ServSafe requirements must be met.
  - Proper cleaning must occur after each use of the kitchen.
- Clearly indicate restroom facilities that are open. Lock or place clear signage on those which are not in use.
- Limit activities inside of the church facilities. Ensure resources are available for the proper cleaning of facilities.
- Suspend nursery services.
- Ensure the attendance in any space to be used (including the Sanctuary) is in full compliance with CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health recommendations for social distancing and hygiene.
- Maintain social distancing: families (persons living in the same households) may be seated together otherwise all seating should reflect social distancing standards and be clearly delineated 6 feet apart.

## Appendix A CDC CLEANING AND SANITIZING GUIDELINES

### Cleaning And Disinfecting Your Facility

#### Everyday Steps, Steps When Someone is Sick, and Considerations for Employers

##### How to clean and disinfect

**Wear disposable gloves** to clean and disinfect.

##### Clean

- **Clean surfaces using soap and water.** Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.

##### High touch surfaces include:

Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

##### Disinfect

- Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
- **Recommend use of EPA-registered household disinfectant.** Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.

Many products recommend:

- Keeping surface wet for a period of time (see product label).
- Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.



- **Diluted household bleach solutions may also be used** if appropriate for the surface. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

**Follow manufacturer's instructions** for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

**Leave solution** on the surface for **at least 1 minute**

Bleach solutions will be **effective** for disinfection **up to 24 hours**.

**To make a bleach solution, mix:**

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water

OR

- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

- **Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.**



##### Soft surfaces

For soft surfaces such as **carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes**

- **Clean the surface using soap and water** or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.



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[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

- **Launder items** (if possible) according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.

OR

- **Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant.** [These disinfectants](#) meet EPA’s criteria for use against COVID-19.

### Electronics

- For electronics, such as **tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines**
- Consider putting a **wipeable** cover on electronics.
- **Follow manufacturer’s instruction** for cleaning and disinfecting.
  - If no guidance, **use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol.** Dry surface thoroughly.



### Laundry

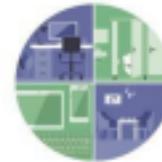
For clothing, towels, linens and other items

- Launder items according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Use the **warmest appropriate water setting** and dry items completely.
- **Wear disposable gloves** when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick **can be washed with other people’s items.**
- **Do not shake** dirty laundry.
- Clean and **disinfect clothes hampers** according to guidance above for surfaces.
- **Remove gloves,** and wash hands right away.



### Cleaning and disinfecting your building or facility if someone is sick

- **Close off areas** used by the person who is sick.
- **Open outside doors and windows** to increase air circulation in the area. **Wait 24 hours** before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Clean and disinfect **all areas used by the person who is sick**, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines.
- If **more than 7 days** since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
  - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.



### When cleaning

- **Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.**
  - Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
  - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a person who is sick.



- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

- **Additional key times to wash hands** include:

- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After using the restroom.
- Before eating or preparing food.
- After contact with animals or pets.
- Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child).

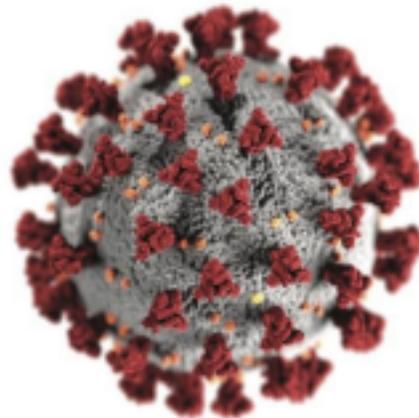
### Additional Considerations for Employers



- **Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Provide instructions **on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days** after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- Develop **policies for worker protection and provide training** to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing cleaning tasks.
  - Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- Ensure workers are **trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals** used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard (29 CFR 1910.1200).
- **Comply** with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE (29 CFR 1910.132).

### For facilities that house people overnight:

- Follow CDC's guidance for [colleges and universities](#). Work with state and local health officials to determine the best way to isolate people who are sick and if temporary housing is needed.
- For guidance on cleaning and disinfecting the bedroom/bathroom for someone who is sick, review CDC's guidance on [disinfecting your home if someone is sick](#).



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