

**Concordia Lutheran Church of Pickerel Lake, Albert Lea, MN**  
**COVID-19 Preparedness Plan**  
**Sept 9, 2020**

*This plan/document is subject to change/modification by the council*

**PURPOSE:** Concordia Lutheran Church of Pickerel Lake with guidance from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), has formulated a plan of action to safely gather 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 adheres to the guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, and the Minnesota Department of Health. This document is based on industry guidance for safe gathering as faith-based communities, as places of worship, for weddings, and for funerals. This plan must be evaluated, monitored, executed, and updated under the supervision of a designated "Plan Administrator" within the organization of Concordia Lutheran Church of Pickerel Lake. The designated "Plan Administrator" shall be the Church Council.

This plan must be posted on site in an easily accessible location that will allow for the Plan to be readily reviewed by all leadership, staff, members and visitors.

Occupancy must be reduced to accommodate for the required social distancing of at least six feet between people who do not live in the same household/family unit.

These 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. Indoor social gatherings or celebrations are still limited to 10 or fewer attendees. Outdoor social gatherings or celebrations are limited to 25 or fewer attendees.

Pastors, musicians, ushers, and all volunteers for events at Concordia are all considered "staff" in this document.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES:** As we gather in-person as a community for worship services, there are certain individuals for whom it might be best to remain home and continue to enjoy mailings and/or online 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 and/or with underlying health issues- are encouraged to stay home at this time. Worship services will continue to be shared online.
- 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.
- Physical (social) distance guidelines of 6 feet will be observed throughout the church.
- All individuals, 5 years old and older, are required to wear a face covering or mask while in the building for in-person worship. Masks will be available to those who do not arrive with one. Cloth face coverings are NOT a substitute for maintaining physical (social) distancing of 6 feet.
- Concordia will make every effort to enforce the guidelines put forth in this plan.

#### **A. STAFF PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOLS**

##### **Ensure Sick Staff Stay Home**

1. Staff are required to conduct a self-check and stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms 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. If you or anyone in your household has had any related symptoms over the last 4-5 days, stay home.

2. Staff with COVID-19 symptoms should be sent home immediately. If they cannot be sent home immediately isolate them in a closed room until they can be sent home. Staff who have been in close contact with a household member with COVID should not be at work until their quarantine period is finished.
3. If staff have been exposed to confirmed COVID-19 in the facility, they shall communicate this with the Church Council, who will gather the necessary information and begin the tracking of events and those who have been in contact with said staff. Notification to those in possible contact will follow.
4. Medical leave is stated in the Defined Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Leaders of our Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Staff will be required to quarantine if confirmed with COVID-19.

### **Physical (Social) Distancing - Staff Must Be At Least Six-Feet Apart**

1. Staff will maximize remote-working as much as possible, except for those duties that require on-site presence.
2. Office hours are flexible at this time. When more than one staff person is in the building at a time, they are to maintain physical distancing of 6 feet and wear masks.
3. There are rooms in the facility that provide the physical distance of 6 feet required for meetings, such as the fellowship hall downstairs.

### **Church Office Hygiene**

1. Staff are required to regularly wash their hands. Hand sanitizer is readily available and accessible in the office at all times. Each staff member has a face mask, and gloves are available when needed.
2. Each staff member will be required to clean and disinfect their work area when finished. The main office desk is used by more than one person, and it is imperative that it is cleaned after each use to reduce any transmission possibility.
3. There will be no food served or shared in the office area.
4. Tissues are provided in each office area.

### **Building and Ventilation Protocols**

1. Established protocols for starting mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and other systems after non-use will be followed.
2. Windows may be propped open to provide fresh air ventilation.
3. Office, room, and sanctuary air conditioning can also be used to provide cool air ventilation.
4. During worship times, the facilities main entrance and exit doors may be propped open to improve ventilation and fresh air circulation.

### **Drop-Off, Pick-Up, And Delivery Practices and Protocols**

1. Whenever possible, attempts will be made to do everything electronically to eliminate the need for close contact with staff and delivery personnel.
2. Physical distance of 6 feet or greater will be maintained while receiving or exchanging deliveries.

## **B. CHURCH SERVICES, FUNERALS, AND WEDDINGS**

### **Occupancy Of The Sanctuary**

1. The full occupancy of our sanctuary, including the balcony, is 314 persons. Firecode states 18 inches per person for bleachers or pews. We have thirty-four 140" pews, four 82" pews, and on the balcony, ten 115" pews. The capacity then for a 140" pew is 7 people, for an 82" pew 4 people, and for a 115" pew, 6 people. Currently the mandates state up to 50% capacity with physical distancing requirements of at least 6 feet. In our balcony, skipping one pew achieves the 6 foot requirement; in the sanctuary, two pews must be skipped to achieve this. A 140" pew could fit up to one family unit of seven, or two units of up to 2 people on ends of the pew with six feet in-between (these arrangements for two family units in a 140" pew, for example, could be one person – one person, one – two, two-two, or three-one with a minimum of 6 feet in-between separate units). With the physical distancing requirements of 6 feet, we can safely seat around 80 people on the main floor and balcony, depending on makeup of family units. Three separate individuals from separate households/families will not be seated in the same pew. Although this is not our 50% occupancy, we cannot have 50% occupancy WHILE maintaining 6 feet distancing required by Minnesota COVID-19 Guidelines and within Fire Marshall Guidelines.

2. Funeral services will follow the same requirements as regular worship services. There will be no luncheon or other food/beverage activities or fellowship. Visitations must be held at the funeral home.

### **Service Time**

1. Concordia will continue to have only one worship time at 10:00 am Sunday morning. This means that when we have received our occupancy limit in the sanctuary and/or occupancy limit by social distancing needs of family units/households in available pews, no additional worshippers will be allowed to enter. Unfortunately this means that some people may be turned away at the door. If we are consistently exceeding our worship capacity, the Church Council will re-evaluate this plan.
2. We will continue to provide video of our worship services online each week. We encourage those who cannot attend to worship with us in this way.
3. During worship, please do your best to keep your children seated and next to you. Children's worship bags will NOT be available, so bringing something from home to keep them occupied would be best.
4. Singing, chanting or group speaking are higher-risk activities, as it more forcefully expels respiratory droplets, so there will not be any singing or group speaking during the in-person worship services.
5. There will not be any hand shaking before, during or after the service. No processions, walking through the aisle before, during, or after the service. And pastor will not be greeting people before or after the service.
6. To limit time together, the doors will not open until 20 minutes prior to the service, and the service itself will be no more than 40 minutes in length.

### **Ensure Sick Participants Stay Home**

Participants are required to conduct a self-check and stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms 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. If you or anyone in your household has had any related symptoms over the last 4-5 days, stay home.

### **Physical (Social) Distancing - All Participants Must Be At Least Six Feet Apart**

1. Flow of movement will be controlled from the designated entrances (the door with the ramp along 190<sup>th</sup> street and the door in the parking lot closest to 190<sup>th</sup> street; the fireside door and front double doors will remain locked) through the Narthex, to the Sanctuary/balcony, and to the designated exits (same as designated entrances). The doors may be propped open to minimize door handle contact.
2. For each service conducted, there will be a 2-person team of ushers/assistants that will guide and control the flow of participants from when they enter to when they exit. They will ensure physical distancing and wearing of masks throughout the facility.
3. Once participants enter the facility they will not be allowed to linger in one spot. When the service ends, participants will be ushered out by pew. No lingering or fellowship in the Narthex or fellowship hall will be allowed.
4. An assistant will be stationed at the bathroom entrance area (the 2 near the elevator). They will maintain the flow in and out to ensure physical distancing is maintained.
5. Worshippers must use hand sanitizer upon entering the sanctuary, which will be available at the entrances. Wipes will be available near the upstairs bathrooms to wipe down door handles, etc.
6. Ushers will ensure six feet of distance is maintained at all times. More detail on the logistics of the services is included in the usher duties section of this policy.

### **Hygiene and Source Controls**

1. Participants 5 years old and older are required to wear a face mask to worship, we ask that you bring your own face mask however, the church will have on hand face masks for those who do not have one. Please have your mask on prior to entering the building.
2. Ushers and worship assistants will be required to wear a face mask when ushering.
3. Participants are required to use hand sanitizer as they enter the building and are asked to regularly wash their hands. Hand sanitizer will be available in designated locations throughout the facility.
4. Tissue for proper cough/sneeze etiquette will be available in designated locations throughout the facility.

5. The offering plate will NOT be passed through the pews, but the wooden church box for offerings will be stationed in the Narthex. Participants can drop off their offerings prior to exiting the facility.
6. Please take bulletins with you when you leave worship.
7. Children's worship bags located in the Narthex have been removed.
8. Community drinking fountains will be "out of order" and signage will be posted.

### **Cleaning And Disinfection Protocols**

1. The main hallway, entrances, sanctuary, balcony and bathrooms will be cleaned before and after any services. The following items will be sanitized before and after use:
  - Doorknobs/handles
  - Handrails
  - Elevator (buttons, doors)
  - Handicap door entrance & exit buttons
  - Pews
  - Offering receptacles
  - Light switches

To minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitizing, the sanctuary will be accessible to the general public only for worship services.

### **C. ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AND PROTOCOL**

1. This document will be posted on site, on our website, sent out in the mail and electronically to the members of Concordia Lutheran Church of Pickerel Lake.
2. Signage will be posted at entrances, exits and throughout the facility outlining established protocols.
3. The designated entrance and exit will be posted.
4. Video links of our services will continue for those unable to attend in-person services.
5. Some spaces in the church building will remain sealed off to the public to minimize the need for additional cleaning and sanitization. These areas will be marked. The church basement remains closed.
6. Baptisms may be done on an arranged basis. Please contact the Pastor with questions regarding this.

### **D. USHER/WORSHIP ASSISTANT DUTIES DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**

- Ushers will play a key role during these restrictions and protocols that are required to have on-site services. We cannot conduct a service without you!
- The Church Council and pastor will confirm that a 2-person team is lined up for each service.
- Ushers and additional volunteers will be needed to support the 2 person duties for each service
- Please be present 30 minutes before the service begins.
- Each usher will be required to wear a face mask.
- Designate one usher at the entrance to ask people to sanitize their hands as they enter, sign people in, and ask them to pick up a bulletin. Remind people they keep their bulletin and take it with them after the service.
- An usher will monitor seating to ensure requirements are followed. Individuals will need to maintain 6 ft. of distance, while family members can sit together. The current distance of our pews will require skipping two rows on the main floor and one row in the balcony. Physical distancing will require creative seating arrangements (Fire Marshall Guidelines allow 18 inches per person) depending on whether it is 1 individual, a couple, a family of 3 or more. You will not get 3 individuals in one pew.
- Once the Sanctuary and Balcony are at capacity of people, through numbers or required seating arrangements by household/family, although awkward, we will have to turn others down when we are at our capacity.
- If we do have a visitor who wants to worship, do your best to accommodate for them. They are a guest in our house and we want to meet their needs as best we can.

#### **During the Service**

- We will not have acolytes for the services. Pastor will light the candles during the prelude music.
- Offering plates will NOT be passed around. The wooden church box for offerings will be stationed in the Narthex for members to place their offering **prior to exiting** through the Narthex.
- Pastor will extinguish the candles during the postlude.

#### **Following the Service**

- After the service, designate one usher to usher people out of the sanctuary. One pew at a time, from back of balcony then to the sanctuary back to front.

- Designate one usher to be stationed with the offering plate. The offering plate will be set up in the Narthex as they exit the sanctuary, members can place their offering just prior to exiting.

**Cancelation Policy**

- Should the council determine a planned in-person worship is no longer safe, the service will be canceled, and members will be notified through the usual means of communication (website, email, social media).

This plan was approved by a vote of the Concordia Lutheran Church of Pickerel Lake Council on September 9, 2020.