

15 July 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,

I give thanks for all of you, for your courage, your persistence in conquering electronic hurdles, and your partnership during this time of waiting and worshiping together. Like you, I miss you. I miss the full liturgy of the sacraments. We have been able to develop meaningful ways to gather for worship and to serve within our community. We will continue to develop ways to gather online or outside. One thing that Good Shepherd has plenty of yard space.

The Re-Gathering Committee has worked tirelessly over the last weeks to create protocols so face to face meetings can be safe as possible when the time comes. The committee members are Lisa Douglas, Erika Forsleff, Sue Peacock, Mike Barnhart, and me. We have an assigned target date: Sunday, August 23. Please note, this is not a hard date. It will depend greatly on the phase set by the Governor. Please read the protocols. If you have questions, contact anyone of us on the committee. Please respond to the enclosed/or electronic survey. The intention is to gather more information to development plans. Please know that on-line worship and activities will continue. They will become part of regular operations.

Be well, practice the 3 W's, and may God bless us all.

Pastor Joanna

PLAN FOR REOPENING GOOD SHEPHERD IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

June 30, 2020

Jesus taught that love of God and love of every neighbor are two inseparable aspects of one great commandment for the people of God (Matthew 22:35-40). Our love for God and neighbor is a response to God's love for the world revealed in Jesus (John 3:16).

Love motivates everything we do as disciples of Jesus Christ, including how we worship and fellowship with one another. Especially during times of crisis, faithful Christian worship expresses the gospel love of God, self, neighbor, and the world and what is shared is love, peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Love is the ground of all our work as a congregation, as members of Good Shepherd Lutheran church and our surrounding community.

During the pandemic, we are carefully planning to make sure that we bring no harm to anyone when we gather or when we serve in our community.

As we move forward in reopening our church in our current circumstances, we are guided by multiple sources. These include:

- Orders from the Governor
- Recommendations from the ELCA, our bishop, and the North Carolina Synod
- Insurance carrier expectations
- Congregation Council
- The safety and health of all who are connected with Good Shepherd

These guidelines are not static and may not be linear. How we apply them may ebb and flow depending on how the guidelines change with time, and whether infections in our community increase or decrease. We encourage congregation council to revisit these guidelines on a very regular basis since public health and safety recommendations for COVID-19 are rapidly changing. In all considerations, we are **first and foremost** guided by our love for one another, our members, our visitors, and our neighbors.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

-The church will provide **clear signage** about our policies and our hygiene practices. We will place signage at entrances that list potential COVID-19 symptoms and suggest that anyone who feels they have such symptoms to go home and contact their health care provider. We will make this information available at the entrances of the church and throughout the premises. Similar recommendations and expectations will be disseminated through our publications (newsletter, website etc.)

- We will strive to make our facilities as clean as possible in accordance with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, and state and county health services.
- We will ask people who are sick or who have been exposed to COVID-19 **NOT** to attend worship.
- We will encourage those among us who are more vulnerable due to age or health to worship online.
- We will continue to provide online worship for anyone who chooses to or has reasons to worship at home.
- We will make efforts to stay in touch with our members who are alone, sick, or isolated. We will assist those who are at home who struggle with technology.

PHYSICAL BUILDING AND GROUNDS

We recommend the following:

- Use designated worship space for worship only.
- Close spaces that are not being used and where people do not need to be.
- Provide hand sanitizer in all bathrooms. Provide a trash can outside of each rest room so that when people exit, they will be able to use a paper towel to grasp the door handle to open it and then will have a place to dispose of the towel. Signage should be placed in the rest rooms requesting social distancing and one stall in the men's and women's bathroom taped off.
- Provide hand sanitizer in the worship spaces, offices, hallways, and any other areas in which it appears appropriate.
- Discontinue use of water fountains. Remove the items from the coffee station in the kitchen and put disposable cups by the kitchen sinks if people need water.
- Encourage social distancing at all times and in all locations within and outside the facility.
- Always require masks when in the facility, including during worship, until this CDC recommendation is rescinded. Provide masks for those who come without one. This excludes the pastor when preaching and assisting minister when speaking if they are six feet or greater from others.
- Provide optimal ventilation as possible.

-Recommend no use of our main church facilities by any outside groups until gathering restrictions have relaxed considerably and public health deems such use safer.

WORSHIP

We recommend the following:

-Masks will be worn from the time the congregation enters the building until they are back in their cars.

- When in person worship takes place, it be held in the Fellowship Hall. This space has hard surfaces that can be quickly and easily cleaned. We also recommend consideration of outdoor worship when possible as it is considered safer.

-When we gather in the Fellowship Hall bulletins will be placed on chairs. Each worshiper will be asked to take theirs home to recycle.

-Provide social distancing so that worshipers maintain six feet from one another. Family units may be clustered with one another. When meeting in the Fellowship Hall chairs will be arranged to accomplish social distancing.

-Ushers/Greeters will assist worshipers by opening doors to enter and exit the building so that people do not have to touch the door. Ushers need to be provided with training in health, safety, and crowd limiting.

-Limit movement during worship.

-No processional or recessional.

-Pastor will not greet worshipers at the front doors following worship. Worshipers who have pastoral concerns will be encouraged to call, e-mail or text Pastor after worship.

-No congregational singing or speaking aloud. Recommendations on singing as well as speaking in unison are clear when the gathered community is together. The assisting minister will respond for the congregation when appropriate while maintaining social distance.

-No Choir. Soloists are acceptable if they maintain greater social distancing. Wind instruments such as flutes or sax are not recommended.

-Provide sign-up in advance for worship to avoid attendance in excess of 50 (or more as restrictions are relaxed) or what our worship space can accommodate and still maintain appropriate social distancing. Consider providing a certain number of slots for people who may drop in and any visitors. By using call in or online sign-up to attend, we can

limit the number of people who will be in worship at a given time. Reservations will need to be done by noon on Thursday. For those who are not electronically connected, phone reservations will be taken.

- Attendance by name be taken by an usher or other designated person and this information be maintained for a period of at least one month. Contact information will be taken on all guests as well. When we maintain the list of those who have signed up, we will have a record if exposure to virus occurs and people need to be notified for contact tracing. Please be advised, if a person contracts COVID-19, information will be shared with the Health Department. Your name will not be disclosed to anyone in the congregation.

- Offering plates will not be passed. Provide an offering plate on a table near the front doors for people to deposit their giving. Encourage online giving.

- Avoid our traditional manner of sharing the Peace. Consider bows, waves, ASL signing, etc.

- Avoid Holy Communion until public health recommendations suggest otherwise. Once Communion has resumed in person, commune in one kind only (bread, no wine). Wine can be consecrated at the Table, not used by pastor or worshippers, and then disposed of reverently on the earth following worship. The pastor should consider not elevating the host (perhaps elevating the paten and cup but not touching the wafer (loaf or flat bread is not recommended as it requires more touch). No common cup or intinction.

- No nursery until well into the final stages of returning to -previous worship practices. A changing station is available in the women's restroom.

- Ushers provided with gloves and sanitizer.

- Prior to the beginning of worship, people will be reminded to maintain social distance (in addition to signs posted throughout the facility). At the end of worship, members will be assisted to depart in a way that maintains social distancing and avoids people congregating in the aisles or parking lot.

FAITH FORMATION

- Until restrictions on gathering are loosened, no faith formation activities in person. The church should assist groups in meeting online or other options for study.

DAY CAMP

-There will be no partnering with Agape Kure Beach Camp this year. Agape canceled all camping opportunities for the summer to care for camp counselors as well as campers.

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

-No meals or coffee served in initial opening. Paper cups will be available in the kitchen for water. When the health department requirements are eased, consider coffee or other beverages with food that does not need to be touched by multiple people, and using disposable cups, sugar packets, stirrers, creamer, etc.

-Encourage the congregation to continue online coffee hour before virtual worship and recommend the church actively look for other avenues for fellowship online during the week.

6/25/2020