

# Trinity Free Lutheran Church

## Coronavirus Risk-Reduction Plan

May 18, 2020 (updated 6.22.2020)

It is essential to the spiritual health of Christians that we gather together for divine worship. We must also protect the physical health and safety of the members of Trinity Free Lutheran Church by taking measures to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

This is a point of intersection between the Third and Fifth Commandments. The Third Commandment (“Remember the Sabbath day”) deals with the necessity of worship, while the Fifth Commandment (“You shall not murder”) forbids us from causing our neighbor any bodily harm and requires us to help and befriend them in every need (see Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms for further explanation). The Third and Fifth Commandments are not in conflict with each other, but we must use wisdom in discerning the best way to keep both commandments.

We encourage those parishioners with risk factors for the coronavirus-caused COVID-19 to avoid physical interaction with others to protect their health. We will make live-streaming of services, CDs, and DVDs available to those who choose not to attend services in-person. We strongly suggest that people with pulmonary conditions, compromised immune systems, or those blessed with advanced age not join us on-site while the coronavirus is present in the community. We will make every effort to encourage their spiritual health while safeguarding their physical wellbeing.

It is right and biblical to protect our own health. When God breathed the breath of life into Adam (Gen. 2:7), he intended that life to stay there. Life is good. Furthermore, our bodies are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). They belong to God, and we are merely stewards of them. We have the responsibility of protecting our bodies and using them for the benefit of our neighbors. We do not have the right to risk our lives irresponsibly, because we are not the owners of our lives; God is. To risk your life is to risk something that you do not own. Yes, on the one hand, Christians should not fear death. And yet, on the other hand, we must not test God. The devil used Psalm 91:11-12 to tempt Jesus to throw himself off the temple (“He will command his angels concerning you ... On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”). Jesus didn’t go for it. He said, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:5-7). We must not test God either. It is wrong to fear death, but it is also right to avoid it. We also recognize that everyone’s health situation is different. Consult your doctor and your pastor for more specific advice.

### **1. Cleanliness of Church Facilities:**

All touchable surfaces: table tops, light switches, door handles, phones, offering plates (if used) backs of pews, faucet handles, flush handles, hand rails, chairs, etc. will be cleaned with an adequate disinfectant before and after each service.

A cup dispenser will be installed at drinking fountain. A temporary sign will be placed asking individuals to utilize disposable cups for water.

Monthly newsletters will be mailed to all families.

## **2. Social Distancing:**

In the sanctuary, every other pew will be marked for use. We will use alternating pews on each side of the sanctuary. Families will be encouraged to sit together, and individuals should sit on each end of a pew to allow spacing between them.

Bulletins will be placed at the end of each pew that is designated for use. Electronic access of bulletins is available to those who choose.

We will post a sign at the entrance encouraging individuals to maintain six feet of separation. Likewise, members should be encouraged to remind each other of this precaution.

We will leave doors open where possible to prevent the need to touch door handles. We will prop the main exterior door open ten or fifteen minutes before the service and again immediately following the service. Bathroom doors will remain open.

## **3. Personal Sanitation:**

Hand sanitizer will be available at the table inside the front door and at other locations in the church building. Adequate supply of hand soap will be maintained at each sink, and hand-washing will be encouraged.

Masks may be used at individual discretion and will be available at the table inside the front door. These masks will be washed and placed in individual plastic bags. Those who choose to utilize masks will take them; they will not be reused.

## **4. Children:**

Toys will be temporarily removed from the nursery. Parents may use the nursery as needed—such as for changing infants—but congregating in the nursery will be discouraged. The church council will revisit toys at the June meeting, restocking the nursery with new and existing toys that can be easily sanitized.

The “busy bags” will be removed and washed. In the June meeting, the church council will consider replacing toys and other contents, and the council will create a plan for placing them back in service.

## **5. Coffee and Fellowship:**

Coffee and snacks following the service will be temporarily suspended. The church council will develop a plan for resuming this in future months. Initially, everyone will be encouraged to exit the building after the service. Socializing may continue outside, weather-permitting, with encouragement to maintain spacing.

## **6. Holy Communion:**

Communion will not be observed with the entire congregation until after the church council has an opportunity to develop a risk-reduction plan at the June meeting. Parishioners may ask the pastor to receive communion at other times individually or as a family.