**COVID-19 Prevention & Mitigation**

**St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church, Taylorsville, Utah**

*Implemented March 10, 2020*

Out of an abundance of care and concern for the health and well-being of the St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church community, this document has been created to guide us in the implementation of best practices during the current outbreak of the Coronavirus strain known as COVID-19. It is important to note that these changes are only temporary and are being utilized in order to reduce the risk of transmission and protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

1. Overview
   1. Resources
      1. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) will be considered our primary resources for information and recommendations.
      2. Secondary sources of information may include the Utah Department of Health, Office of the Governor, local hospitals and school districts, nearby colleges and universities, the ELCA Churchwide, and the Rocky Mountain Synod.
   2. Contact Information
      1. A full church directory in digital format will be distributed to the members of the Executive Committee and the Pastor.
      2. The ability to email the entire congregation from outside the church office will be made available to the Council and the Pastor.
      3. A list of phone numbers for church members with no access to email will be made available to the Executive Committee and the Pastor.

* 1. Communication
     1. Important and time sensitive information will be released primarily via email, social media, and the church website.
     2. Phone calls and text messaging will be used as a secondary form of communication.
     3. Reminders will be shared via bulletin insert and verbal announcements whenever possible.
  2. Hand Washing
     1. Everyone is encouraged to use proper hand washing techniques as often as possible. The best defense against the spread of illness is to wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (the time it takes to pray the Lord’s Prayer).
     2. Hand sanitizer is only for those times when you don’t have access to soap and water.
     3. Keep your hands away from your face (eyes, nose, and mouth) and be sure to cough/sneeze into your elbow.
  3. Illness Protocol
     1. Signs and Symptoms
        1. COVID-19: fever, cough, shortness of breath, symptoms appear 2-14 days after exposure
        2. Influenza: fever, cough, chills, sweats, congestion, sore throat, fatigue, weakness, muscle aches
        3. Allergies: sneezing, itchy nose or eyes, runny nose, watery eyes
     2. COVID-19 Higher Risk Category
        1. Older Adults: The CDC considers this to be anyone over the age of 60 years old.
        2. Chronic Illness: diabetes, heart conditions, respiratory problems (including lung diseases such as asthma), those under treatment for cancer, any condition that weakens the immune system
        3. Immunocompromised: anyone with an immune system that is impaired or weakened either through medication or illness; those with compromised immune systems have a reduced ability to fight infections and diseases (like Coronavirus).
     3. If you are sick, please stay home. We can’t emphasize this enough. At this time, we want to be cautious and help prevent the potential spread of illness. This applies to church staff as well as volunteers and members.
     4. If you are in the CDC’s “higher risk” category, we understand if you feel the need to stay home during this time. Please let us know how we can best support you.
     5. If you or someone you know is sick, please let the Pastor know. Please don’t visit the sick yourself.
  4. Offering
     1. Please continue to give offering. When this is over, we still want to have a church. We support mission and ministry in the United States and the world through our giving in addition to providing salaries for staff and the upkeep of our facility.
     2. Offering can be dropped off, mailed to the office, or you can request your bank to send an electronic check.
     3. Now is the time to sign up with Tithe.ly our electronic provider for one time or regular offering gifts. It is available through our website.

1. Stage 1 Protocols
   1. Worship
      1. Peace: Sharing of the peace is to be limited to the area where you are seated. Use elbow bumps, bows or the peace sign to extend a greeting.
      2. Offering: Offering plates will not be passed. An offering plate will be placed on a table that people will pass on after communion. Anyone handling the plates or what’s contained in them (i.e. counters and whomever sets the plates out) will need to follow hand washing protocols.
      3. Greeting: The Pastor will not be shaking hands after worship. Members are encouraged to refrain from handshaking and other physical contact at this time.
      4. Worship Materials: Seasonal bulletins will not be “reused” but instead, you are invited to keep a copy for yourself and bring it back each week. If you must use a hymnal, be sure to follow proper hand washing protocols after use. Again, this is the time to utilize the electronic bulletin. There are two Amazon Fire devices that are available to use during worship and are sanitized after every use. If you need assistance in setting up your device, the Communications Ministry team will help you.
      5. Baptismal Font: Emptied of water. If there is a baptism, the bowl will be sanitized and filled, used for the baptism, and following worship will be drained, sanitized.
   2. Holy Communion
      1. Everyone assisting with communion will wash their hands with soap and water in the sacristy during the offering hymn. While waiting, Pastor will give a reminder announcement about communion practices.
      2. Bread/wafers will be dropped into hands to eliminate physical contact.
      3. Those involved in the set-up and/or clean-up of communion (putting out bread, setting the altar) should follow proper handwashing protocols and use the gloves provided in the sacristy.
   3. Food and Drink
      1. No food or drink will be served before, during, or after worship. This includes, but is not limited to coffee, donuts, cookies, and other treats.
      2. Water fountains will be sealed and covered to discourage use.
      3. If Sunday school teachers find it necessary to have snacks and drinks, the items must be individually packaged.
      4. The Hospitality Hour is temporarily suspended. Church goers are instead encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to share with local food banks and shelters.
2. Stage 2 Protocols
   1. Events and Activities
      1. In general, the cancellation of church events and activities, including worship, will be made under the guidance of the CDC and/or the health department. Recommendations from other sources will be considered by the Council.
      2. All Ministry Teams are trusted to make decisions about their meetings that fit their needs and comfort level. Please make sure that changes to meetings, especially cancellations, are quickly communicated to the Pastor and in addition to the team members.
      3. Those who conduct other programs such as Bible studies, choir rehearsals, and other small groups that meet at the church should make decisions with their groups that best fit the needs and comfort level of the group members. All groups should immediately inform the Pastor of cancellations. Please note that the Council reserves the right to cancel events at any time.
      4. Please consider utilizing programs like Zoom, Facebook messenger, and FaceTime to still have meetings even if you choose not to meet in person.
3. Stage 3 Protocols
   1. Cancellation Protocol
      1. If, at any point, the congregation needs to cancel worship, we will communicate this information as quickly as possible via email, social media, and the church website.
      2. Some members, without access to internet, will need to be called.
   2. Digital Worship
      1. The Pastor will plan to lead an abbreviated online worship service in the event that regular worship services are cancelled.
      2. Online services will be available for viewing on the church Facebook page and may include scripture, prayer, a message, and hymns that are in the public domain.
      3. A print worship resource will be available via email and on the church website for those without access to Facebook.
   3. Staff
      1. When possible, staff will work from home.
      2. As needed, staff will conduct conference calls with each other and the leadership of the congregation.