

Dear St. James family,

Most congregations of the MN South District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod voluntarily closed corporate worship out of respect for and adherence to the guidelines of our state leadership, upholding the 4th Commandment. We also wanted to be conscientious of our neighbors' health and limit the opportunity of more within the community getting sick, upholding the 5th Commandment. All the while we pastors and church leaders also struggled with guilt and sadness in knowing that by not coming together for worship, we were bringing the 3rd Commandment into question. Thanks be to God, during our time apart we were able to provide God's Word to our people through the blessing of technology. Though not normal or ideal, we give thanks for being able to gather distantly, united by God's Word.

Beginning May 31st we will be able to gather in person once again. As we come back together to celebrate the blessed reality of being the body of Christ, we do so first in faith. Our faith assures us that we are saved by grace through the blood of Christ. Second, with no fear. We fear not the circumstances of this world for as Christians covered in the blood of Christ, though we know not the future, we know Who holds the future. We note that moving forward without fear does not mean we move forward in a reckless and thoughtless manner. Third, in repentance. We repent of our sin against God's Word and the regular despising of His Word as we value other busyness of life over and above the needful reception of Word and Sacrament.

So we proceed with wisdom. We care for the vulnerable among us as we always have and we show concern and love for all of our neighbors. With that in mind, let us proceed with reopening our church with the following health and safety procedures in place. These protocols have been developed based on current guidance issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health authorities.

Please note that we will make no requirement in the anticipation that we come together as the responsible citizens we've always been. Please take these protocols into consideration within your own health context and vulnerability.

1. Non-family members are encouraged to spread out among the pews. Stagger seating within the pews (if one family is on one end and another on the other end, then skip a pew and sit in the middle, etc.)
2. Surfaces will be thoroughly sanitized after each service, including all entryways and doors. Hand sanitizer is available at all entryways.
3. Doors will be propped or held open. Though configuration for one way traffic is noted in the protocols, we, by nature of coming and leaving worship already practice one-way traffic.
4. Those who wish to fellowship are encouraged to do so with social distancing.
5. Although no signs will be posted concerning social distancing and sanitation requirements our members will practice such.
6. The offering can be left in the offering plates located at the entry to the nave.
7. Wear protective gear as you feel necessary.
8. Refrain from handshakes.
9. The Worship Choir will not rehearse or sing for services for the time being.

10. Practice normal safe measures necessary to stop the spread of germs (e.g. cough or sneeze into a shirtsleeve, handkerchief, or tissue; avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth to help slow the spread of germs).
11. We will use a printed Order of Service for the time being.
12. Ventilation will be increased as much as possible, opening windows and doors, as weather permits.
13. Be aware of the number of people in restrooms and be considerate of space when near others.
14. Those considered vulnerable or those who choose to remain home will still be able to access worship via recording on DVD or the internet.
15. As is always the case, if sick or a member of an immediate family member who is sick, please consider staying home.
16. No person is obligated to attend worship, though we certainly hope and pray that at some point all our members would do so. For now, if you do not feel safe, it is understood if you stay away.
17. Communion will be served in a walk through manner to help keep distance between each communicant. Both individual and common cup will be offered. The common cup is wiped with Everclear alcohol after each use.

Our attendance is not to exceed 25% of the seating capacity of the worship space. Given the attendance records for St. James, this means we will be able to resume regular services while implementing the above guidelines. If deemed necessary, we will consider offering more services on other days of the week instead of Sunday, in order to spread them out.

For a while there will be three opportunities to worship:

Friday	10 am (<i>During the recording session</i>)
Sunday	8 am
Sunday	10:30 am

Bible Study will resume as normal with attendees considering the same protocols stated above.

If our leadership becomes aware of a clear, immediate, and imminent threat to the safety of the attendees or determines that the above-mentioned protocols cannot be observed, the gathering will be canceled until the protocols can be observed.

For those who wish not to come to church but wish to have pastoral care, please contact the office and speak with Pastor Loder.

Dear saints of St. James, it will be a blessing to see you in person once again. I certainly realize there are going to be mixed thoughts and emotions about moving forward. I encourage you to remember Who's you are in this time and to consider limiting your intake of information about the current health matters to reliable sources and always seek the actual contexts from which any report is coming.

We do well to remember that we are all children of God who are navigating a broken world. As such, we will not, ever, agree on all matters outside of Scripture, which even there, we sometimes have a hard time finding agreement. Let us move forward in love which covers a multitude of sins. Most importantly, let us move forward in the truth that surpasses all understanding - God's love for us in Christ Jesus.