

We are Better Together
A Plan to Safely and Purposefully Join Together
Adopted: May 26, 2020 | Emanuel's Lutheran Church
Council Updated: June 8, 2021

The protocols outlined in this plan regarding worship, small group ministries, or any on-campus gathering are expected to be flexible. The protocols are based on the cumulative, positivity rates for the 5 County area around, including Seguin, and the safety recommendations by the City of Seguin, the Guadalupe County Emergency District, Texas Lutheran University's COVID Task Force, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). These organizations have been instrumental in helping us determine safe and effective gathering protocols. Keep in mind that **all at risk* demographics** are encouraged to refrain from any on-campus activities, worship services, or ministry groups.

Schedule of Changes:

Following the updated guidelines issued by the CDC on May 13, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>, Emanuel's Church Council adopts the following updated practices and protocols for worship, fellowship activities, small group ministries, outside rentals, volunteers and staff, and ministry partners effective Sunday, July 4 and following:

- Those persons who **are fully vaccinated**, meaning they have surpassed the 2-week threshold after their second shot, Pfizer or Moderna, or the 2-week threshold after their single shot, Johnson & Johnson, may choose to not wear a mask while participating in church activities and gatherings and may choose to sit closer than 6-feet to individuals not of the same household or traveling group.
- Those persons who are **not fully vaccinated**, meaning those who have not surpassed the 2-week threshold after their second shot or single dose shot, as attributed above, must continue to wear their mask at all times while on the church campus and maintain a physical distance of at least 6-feet from individuals not of the same household or traveling group.
- Fellowship gatherings and small group gatherings that include food and beverages may return to the pre-pandemic practices of self-serve as applicable. Remember that the health and wellbeing of everyone participating in each event is paramount to the ongoing wellbeing of our church, its ministries, and its ability to serve our neighbors. The highest etiquette for personal hygiene, including the washing of hands for at least 20 seconds, the using hand sanitizer, and staying home when not feeling well, must be followed.

Expectations of the Congregation:

With the above outline set out, the following guidelines are being implemented as a safe and purposeful way to be together in ministry. These guidelines will apply to all ministry groups, rental groups, building tenants, Bible study groups, and congregation members **until further notice** from the Church Council. Remember, we are first and foremost a church, a place of grace, hope, and love lived and shared. We show these characteristics of our Christian faith by always placing others before ourselves. The wearing of our masks, the giving of a little extra space, and the monitoring of our own health symptoms, even if we are not in the midst of a pandemic, are the tangible ways of being Christ in the world; of loving our neighbor. As we live into these new ways of being church together, be mindful of how you can care better for those around you and be willing to take an extra step so that they too feel at ease and welcome.

Worship Times: Worship will be held inside the sanctuary at 10:30am. Pews have been marked off to maintain safe, physical distances between all in attendance. Congregants who are fully vaccinated are **not required** to wear a mask while in the building. Congregants who are not fully vaccinated **must always** wear a mask while in the building. Our worship practices continue to be modified in the following ways, 1) Pews will continue to be marked off, providing seating in every other pew, 2) Holy Communion will be offered in three ways for those wishing to commune in person. First, there will be two continuous lines offering the bread wafers and the wine or juice. Congregants will be invited by the worship ushers to come forward, pew by pew, to receive the elements. A wafer will be dropped into the hands of each person, who will then step to the next station where they will select an empty glass or a glass filled with juice from the communion tray, then step to the last and final station where their empty glass will be filled with wine and where they may consume the wine or juice and dispose of the glass in the silver bowls at the ends of the first pews. Congregants are greatly encouraged to maintain physical distance between themselves and others as they participate in Communion. Communion Assistants will follow the highest etiquette for personal hygiene, including the washing of hands for at least 20 seconds, the using hand sanitizer, and staying home when not feeling well. Second, there will be a gluten free station, located at the entrance to the chapel, nearest the pulpit, where congregants in need of these elements may receive Communion. The Communion Assistant will invite each congregant to retrieve their own wafer and glass. Third, for those unable to walk to the front of the sanctuary, ushers will inform one of the pastors or one of the other Communion Assistants, of where those congregants are seated, and Communion will be brought to them personally. 3) Sharing of the Peace will resume as a worship practice, for those who wish to move around the sanctuary. Congregants are strongly encouraged to sanitize their hands before and after this time of fellowship, for both their personal and our communal wellbeing. Please be mindful of those not wishing to shake hands or receive hugs and share the peace with them through a distanced wave, “peace” sign, or another such sign of hope and joy. 4) Offering baskets are available at each entrance of the church for the leaving envelopes and any other offerings, and 5) At the close of our worship service, a cleaning team will disinfect each pew end and wipe down the surfaces touched during the service. The service will continue to be broadcast at 10:30am via KWED AM 1580 as it has been, and by the conclusion of the summer, live streamed again on the Emanuel’s Facebook and YouTube pages. All bulletins and worship materials will be available online for each weekly service, including special services, as applicable, via our church’s website, www.emanuelslutheranchurc.com. The Church Council and staff will remain attentive to local health department and state regulations, as well as CDC guidelines regarding worshipping communities, gathering groups, and any changes in COVID19 positivity rates in our city and county that would require changes to our gathering practices. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Sanctuary Seating: Safe distances are key. Seating will take place every other pew, as notated by the printed signs at each pew entrance point. Congregants who are fully vaccinated may sit as close as they wish while worshipping but those who are not vaccinated must be seated 6 feet apart unless they live in the same home or have traveled to worship together. Be attentive to the needs of those seated alongside you as some may request additional space, even if they are vaccinated. The chapel and choir transept seating will be chairs or spaces for wheelchairs set at 6-foot intervals and are available to anyone who wishes to remain spread out. The nursery, for those preschool aged to kindergarten, will be open for those who wish to use this staffed and monitored space during worship. The “Pray Ground” will remain closed as additional cleaning procedures are adopted and implemented. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Choirs (Overall Music): Singing is one of the greatest blessings of our worshipping community. Congregants who are fully vaccinated are invited to sing and participate in worship without their mask. Congregants who are not fully vaccinated must always leave their masks on during the worship service, especially while singing. Singing, per national research provided by the National Association of Teachers of Singing, is one of the greatest ways to spread a virus. Our Handbell Choir and Vocal Choir, as well as guitarists, instrumentalists, and others who can help us diversify how we encounter the music of worship will continue to be very important to this time of sharing in the worship leadership.

Post-Service Fellowship - The fellowship time for coffee and snack, following worship, will begin again. Those serving during the fellowship time must always wear gloves while handling any food or drink. Congregants are invited to serve themselves, however, serving utensils must be used when retrieving food items from common plates. The highest etiquette for personal hygiene, including the washing of hands for at least 20 seconds, the using hand sanitizer, and staying home when not feeling well, must be followed. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Communion: Holy Communion will be offered in three ways for those wishing to commune in person. First, there will be two continuous lines offering the bread wafers and the wine or juice. Congregants will be invited by the worship ushers to come forward, pew by pew, to receive the elements. A wafer will be dropped into the hands of each person with the words, "The body of Christ, given for you", who will then step to the next station where they will select an empty glass or a glass filled with juice from the communion tray, then step to the last and final station where their empty glass will be filled with wine, with the words, "The blood of Christ, shed for you," and where they may consume the wine or juice and dispose of the glass in the silver bowls at the ends of the first pews. Congregants are greatly encouraged to maintain physical distance between themselves and others as they participate in Communion. Communion Assistants will follow the highest etiquette for personal hygiene, including the washing of hands for at least 20 seconds, the using hand sanitizer, and staying home when not feeling well. Second, there will be a gluten free station, located at the entrance to the chapel, nearest the pulpit, where congregants in need of these elements may receive Communion. The Communion Assistant will invite each congregant to retrieve their own wafer and glass. Third, for those unable to walk to the front of the sanctuary, ushers will inform one of the pastors or one of the other Communion Assistants, of where those congregants are seated, and Communion will be brought to them personally. For those who remain at home listening and participating online or on the radio, our "Remaining Together While Apart" Communion practices remain in effect. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Ushers: Guiding people to their seats, making sure we are mindful of those wishing to have additional space around them, and aiding in the cleaning and preparing of the worship space for each service will be the vital work of each of our usher teams. Ushers need to be present for worship no less than 45 minutes prior to worship. This will allow ample time to prepare the sanctuary for worship and to check in with the pastors for any additional changes or updates. During Communion, Ushers will welcome congregants, pew-by-pew, to receive the sacrament. An Usher Checklist is available on the cabinet doors of the usher closet in the Narthex with detailed instructions for our practices and protocols during worship. The watchful and supportive eyes of these volunteers will be called upon even more at this time to make sure our house of worship is safe, open, and welcoming to all. At the close of worship, Ushers will make sure the sanctuary is clean and prepared for the next scheduled worship service or

event. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Sunday School (Bible Studies): Faith Formation in the church is a vital part of our shared ministry together. Being responsible with how we gather will be paramount for the continued safety and health of our church. All groups who gather for Sunday School must follow the outlined protocols above regarding mask wearing. For those who are unvaccinated, and only while seated in a class, you may choose to take off your mask but you must maintain 6 -feet of physical distance between you and those not from the same household or traveling group. Materials may be shared as applicable by participants in class, but those who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to keep and use separate material. The serving of food and drinks during a class session is allowed but must follow the outlined guidance given in the “post-service fellowship” paragraph. Any surface used, including, but not limited to, tables, counter tops, etc., need to be cleaned at the end of each meeting/gathering. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Ministry Groups (Quick Quilters, Ladies Aid, Property Stewards): Ministry groups are invited to fully resume their weekly and monthly activities while adhering to the outlined protocols above regarding mask wearing. For those who are unvaccinated, and only while seated in a class, you may choose to take off your mask but you must maintain 6 -feet of physical distance between you and those not from the same household or traveling group. Materials may be shared as applicable by participants, but those who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to keep and use separate material. The serving of food and drinks during a ministry group gathering is allowed but must follow the outlined guidance given in the “post-service fellowship” paragraph. Any surface used, including, but not limited to, tables, counter tops, etc., need to be cleaned at the end of each meeting/gathering. Please make sure to schedule any additional room needs or group needs in advance so that the Church Office can make sure we are staying safe as a gathering community. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Office Visitors: Our church office is certainly one of the heartbeats of our ministry during the week. It will be the best use of your time and extremely helpful for our staff if appointments with staff are made prior to visiting. Some of our offices are small and might require the use of a different space for our conversations if a staff member, or those who are gathering, request. Please remain in the lobby until a staff member comes to you and welcomes you into their office. **Masks must be worn by those who are not vaccinated while on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Day School Chapel: Chapel will take place every Wednesday morning during the school year at 10:30am in the sanctuary.

**All ELC members who are at risk, per the CDC guidelines and definitions, meaning: those 65 years of age and older or those with chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, chronic heart disease, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, liver disease or weakened immune system, are asked to remain at home at this time.*