

We are Better Together

A Plan to Safely and Purposefully Join Together

Adopted: May 26, 2020 | Emanuel's Lutheran Church

Council Updated: January 11, 2022

The protocols outlined in this plan regarding worship, small group ministries, or any on-campus gathering are expected to be flexible. The protocols are established based on the positivity rates of Guadalupe, per the CDC COVID Data Tracker, https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Texas&data-type=Risk&list_select_county=48187, and the safety recommendations given 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:

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, January 16 and following:

- **All persons** participating in campus events, regardless of vaccination status, **must always be masked**. This includes those gathering for worship, Bible study, Sunday School, small groups, outside rentals, service groups, etc.
- All person participating in on campus events must maintain a physical distance of at least 6-feet from individuals not of the same household or traveling group. This includes those gathering for worship, Bible study, Sunday School, small groups, outside rentals, service groups, etc.
- Fellowship gatherings and small group gatherings that include food and beverages may continue to gather but must refrain from "buffet-style" food service. Food and drink items must be served by gloved and masked volunteers or caterers, depending on the setting, or pre-plated or pre-poured before distribution or pick-up.
- Our current practice of sitting in every other pew, taking up the offering upon entering the sanctuary, and limiting the movement of people during the "Sharing of the Peace" will remain in place. Communion assistants and other worship leaders, specifically during the taking of Holy Communion, will remained greatly distanced to aid in the safe consumption of the bread and wine. Cups in the Communion trays will be spread out to decrease the possibility of multiple fingers on the same cup.
- 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. 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. Sharing of the Peace is encouraged but congregants are asked to refrain from moving around the sanctuary and instead share signs of peace as a distanced wave, "peace" sign, or another such sign of hope and joy.
3. Offering baskets are available at each entrance of the church for the leaving envelopes and any other offerings. Online options for giving are also available in each weekly bulletin and via our church's website, www.emanuelslutheranchurch.com.
4. The service will continue to be broadcast at 10:30am via KWED AM 1580 as it has been and will be live streamed on Emanuel's YouTube channel. All bulletins and worship materials will also be available online for each weekly service, including special services as applicable, via our church's website, www.emanuelslutheranchurch.com and through our weekly newsletter.

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 all those who are 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. All congregants must maintain a physical distance of at least 6-feet from individuals not of the same household or traveling group. Be attentive to the needs of those seated alongside you as some may request additional space. The chapel will be available for wheelchairs and attending chairs set at 6-foot intervals. The nursery, for those preschool aged and below, will be open for those who wish to use this staffed and monitored space during worship. The "Pray Ground" will remain closed until additional cleaning procedures are adopted and implemented.

Masks must be worn by all those who are on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.

Choirs (Overall Music): Singing is one of the greatest blessings of our worshipping community. All congregants participating in campus events, especially those who are singing worship leaders, must be masked. 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 snacks, following worship, will continue however, food and drink service must refrain from "buffet-style" food service. Food and drink items must be served by gloved and masked volunteers or caterers, depending on the setting, or pre-plated or pre-poured before distribution or pick-up. The highest etiquette for personal hygiene, including the washing of hands for at least 20 seconds, the using of hand sanitizer, and staying home when not feeling well, must be followed. **Masks must be worn by all those who are on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Communion: Holy Communion will be offered in four ways. **First**, there will be two continuous lines offering the bread wafers and the wine or juice. Congregants will be invited by the 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. Glasses can be disposed of in the silver bowls at the ends of the first pews. Congregants must 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 of hand sanitizer, and staying home when not feeling well. **Second**, for those needing gluten free wafers, a separate plate will be presented to each congregant who will retrieve the wafer from the plate and then move to the Communion cup station. **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. **Fourth**, following our current COVID communion practice of “Communing Together While Apart,” member who are at home are invited to partake of the elements of Communion, as they have set aside each week, as they hear the words of Holy Communion spoken, “Body of Christ given for you...Blood of Christ shed for you.” **Masks must be worn by all those who are 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 all those who are 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 and must maintain 6 -feet of physical distance between you and those not from the same household or traveling group. 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 all those who are on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Ministry Groups (Quick Quilters, Ladies Aid, Property Stewards, etc.): Ministry groups are invited to fully resume their weekly and monthly activities while adhering to the outlined protocols above regarding mask wearing and maintaining 6 -feet of physical distance between you and those not from the same household or traveling group. 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 all those who are 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 the lobby until a staff member comes to you and welcomes you into their office. **Masks must be worn by all those who are on the church campus and while around other ministry partners.**

Day School Chapel: Chapel is scheduled to take place every Wednesday at 10:15am, but with recent changes to the COVID numbers, chapel will be planned and scheduled on a week-by-week basis to maintain the best protocols and practices for our students and teachers.

**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 strongly encouraged to mask regardless of vaccination status and to maintain safe physical distance while in group settings at this time.*