

**We are Better Together**  
*A Plan to Safely and Purposefully Join Together*  
Adopted: May 26, 2020 | Emanuel's Lutheran Church  
Council Updated: November 10, 2020

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 and including Seguin. Reporting by the City of Seguin, the Guadalupe County Emergency District, and Texas Lutheran University, along with other State and local organizations, are used to determine when we, as a community, have experienced a declining COVID19 positivity rate without resurgence. 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:**

To happen immediately:

- Singing is to cease by all those in worship and will be done by appointed musicians starting Sunday, November 15, 2020.

To happen if the 5 County positivity rate reaches 5%:

- Church Council convenes an emergency Zoom meeting, at which a timeline for discontinuing in-person worship, small group gatherings, and other church events will be determined.
- The Day School will continue its safe campus protocols, as outlined by State mandate and internal policies as an essential institution for our community and families.

To happen if the 5 County positivity rates jumps above 8%:

- In the event the positivity rate exceeds 8%, at any point in time, an immediate discontinuing of all, on-campus activities will happen. This includes worship, small group ministries, and outside organizations.
- Church office staff will resume modified working schedules, making their home offices their primary workplaces.
- Building tenants will be made aware of the reduction in on-campus staff and they will be asked to limit any outside visitors to essential ones only.

Following a required discontinuation of on-campus activities, activities will begin again when the following is met:

- The 5 County positivity rate, per the cumulative research by organizations named above, reaches 1% or below
  - Council will reconvene to modify these protocols and make a plan to return to on-campus activities which includes worship, small group ministries, and outside organizations.

**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.

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. Attendees are **required** to wear a mask at all times while in the building. Additionally, new practices will be initiated for our service: 1) Singing will be done by dedicated soloists or musical groups and not by the congregation. This includes hymns, liturgy refrains, the Psalm, or other service areas where singing is normally heard, 2) Sharing of the Peace will be done from the pew, at a distance, limiting contact with other worshippers, 3) Communion will be available for pick-up in the Narthex along with the worship bulletin. Should additional Communion sets be needed, a basket with individually packaged elements will be available at each entrance point, 4) All hymnals have been removed from the pew-back holders and all worship music, including the Psalm and other liturgy elements, are printed in the bulletin, 5) Ushers will dismiss each pew at the close of worship, allowing for 6-feet of distance between each leaving group of attendees, and 6) 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, as well as live streamed on the Emanuel's Facebook page. All bulletins and worship materials will be made available online for each weekly service, including special services, as applicable. The Church Council and staff will remain in constant conversation with our local health department and state regulations regarding worshipping communities, gathering groups, and the change in COVID19 positivity rates in our city and county. **Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.**

Sanctuary Seating and Fellowship: Safe distances are key. Seating will take place every other pew, as notated by the printed signs at each pew entrance point. Congregants must be seated 6 feet apart unless they live in the same home or have traveled to worship together. Seating will be limited to no more than 3 individuals per pew, a group of four or less with one individual, two groups of two, or one group of five or more people. The chapel and choir transept seating will be chairs or spaces for wheelchairs set at 6-foot intervals. The nursery and "Pray Ground" will be closed for the foreseeable future to maintain approved physical distancing and cleanliness of areas used by our youngest worshippers. There will be no buffet-style or self-serve style of after worship snacks or coffee for the foreseeable future to aid in our ability to maintain safe physical distancing and hygiene of cups, plates, food, etc. However, prepackaged and pre-poured refreshments may be available. Ministry participants will be asked to wait for the plates, packaged snacks, and or cups of coffee or juice to be filled and set out by gloved volunteers before individuals pick them up versus filling a plate or cup personally. **Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.**

Choirs (Overall Music): Singing is one of the greatest blessings of our worshipping community, especially as we have been away from one another for so long. However, singing, per national research provided by the National Association of Teachers of Singing, is one of the greatest ways to spread the virus. This will mean extreme changes must take place if we are to worship together again. The congregation will not sing until an appointed time when transmission of the virus is deemed nonexistent in our community, which is at 1% positivity or less. This will mean the use of soloist, duets, and other assorted vocal musicians will be necessary to lead worship for all hymns and liturgy. Worshippers will be encouraged to follow along with each hymn, selection of liturgy, etc., but we **must refrain** from singing. Our Handbell Choir, as well as guitarists, instrumentalists, and others who can help us diversify how we encounter the music of worship will be very important to this time of sharing in the worship leadership.

Post-Service Fellowship - There will be no buffet-style or self-serve style of after worship snacks or coffee for the foreseeable future to aid in our ability to maintain safe physical distancing and hygiene of cups, plates, food, etc. However, prepackaged and pre-poured refreshments may be available. Ministry

participants will be asked to wait for the plates, packaged snacks, and or cups of coffee or juice to be filled and set out by gloved volunteers before individuals pick them up versus filling a plate or cup personally. These guidelines follow the practices of “after worship fellowship.” **Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.**

Communion: As a safety precaution for all of those involved, communion will be taken while seated in the pews. Worshippers will be invited to use the kneelers or to simply sit on the edge of their pew as we partake in Holy Communion. As worshippers enter the sanctuary, ushers will direct attendees to pre-packaged communion kits for pick-up available in the Narthex. These kits include both a wafer and cup of juice in one container. For those needing Gluten-free wafers, special kits will be marked. Following the praying of the Lord’s Prayer, worshippers will be directed to open the wafer portion of their kit and take the wafer together, hearing the words, “The body of Christ, given for you.” In the same fashion, the juice, found in the small cup just below the wafer, will be drunk together, hearing the words, “The blood of Christ, shed for you.” For those who choose to not receive communion, a blessing will be offered following the celebration of Holy Communion. Ushers will be carrying trash cans in which the used Communion containers and your bulletin may be placed into following the close of the worship service. **Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.**

Ushers: Guiding people to their seats, making sure we are physically distancing, 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 60 minutes prior to worship. This will allow ample time to prepare the sanctuary – which includes wiping down all pews and pew backs if they have not already been done, laying out the bulletins for those arriving to pick up on their own, setting out the regular and gluten-free communion kits, and to make sure all doors are open as people begin to arrive and locked as service starts. 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. Ushers will also be responsible for seating and releasing each pew, individually, to make sure physical distancing recommendations are always being followed. At the close of worship and during the dismissal of each row, ushers will carry with them small trash cans to receive used Communion kits and bulletins. **Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are 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 to the safety and health of our church. All groups who gather for Sunday School must follow the 6 -foot guideline for physical distancing. There will be no sharing of materials, including Bibles, unless individuals live in the same home or are traveling together. There will be no buffet-style or self-serve style of after worship snacks or coffee for the foreseeable future to aid in our ability to maintain safe physical distancing and hygiene of cups, plates, food, etc. However, prepackaged and pre-poured refreshments may be available. Ministry participants will be asked to wait for the plates, packaged snacks, and or cups of coffee or juice to be filled and set out by gloved volunteers before individuals pick them up versus filling a plate or cup personally. These guidelines follow the practices of “after worship fellowship.” **Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.**

Ministry Groups (Quick Quilters, Ladies Aid, Property Stewards): Ministry groups may be invited to resume their activities, understanding that no group can meet with more than 15 attendees. Physical distancing of 6 feet between all participants must be followed for every meeting/gathering. Any surface used, including, but not limited to, tables, counter tops, etc., must be cleaned at the end of each

meeting/gathering. If materials are being used, including but not limited to Bible, study materials, etc., there must be enough copies for each person or household to have without sharing. There will be no buffet-style or self-serve style of after worship snacks or coffee for the foreseeable future to aid in our ability to maintain safe physical distancing and hygiene of cups, plates, food, etc. However, prepackaged and pre-poured refreshments may be available. Ministry participants will be asked to wait for the plates, packaged snacks, and or cups of coffee or juice to be filled and set out by gloved volunteers before individuals pick them up versus filling a plate or cup personally. These guidelines follow the practices of “after worship fellowship.” 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 while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.**

Church Staff (Office Schedule): Our church staff will be following a schedule that reduces the number of people in the office, on any given day, to three. Our “in office” days and hours will be Monday to Thursday 8am to 5pm. One of our pastors will be in the office every day to support and care for any pastoral care needs. Our staff will be working remotely when they are not present in the office and can be emailed, called, or texted at any time during our outlined office hours. It will be best to schedule a time to meet with staff if you have a specific need. Many of our staff care for and support family members who are in the “at risk” demographics, as well as the ministries of our church through which we care for those most at risk. Limiting our contact with each other and with visitors, increases our ability to effectively and safely serve our congregation and community. Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.

Office Visitors: Our church office is certainly one of the heartbeats of our ministry during the week. It is vital for those visiting the office to not congregate in the lobby of the office. Our chairs are reduced to provide space for two people to sit and wait. 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. Please remain the lobby until a staff member comes to you and welcomes you into their office. Masks must be worn while you are on the church campus and while you are around other ministry partners.

Day School Chapel: Chapel will take place every Wednesday morning 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.*