

We are Better Together
A Plan to Safely and Purposefully Join Together
Adopted: May 26, 2020 | Emanuel's Lutheran Church
Council Updated: September 28, 2020

The dates outlined in this plan regarding worship are expected to be flexible, based on the City of Seguin and Guadalupe County declaring that we, as a community, have experienced a declining COVID19 positivity rate without resurgence. Office staff and ministry groups will return with a more specific timeline, as noted in the schedule of beginnings below. Keep in mind that **all at risk* demographics** are encouraged to refrain from any on-campus activities, worship services, or ministry groups.

Schedule of Beginnings:

Monday, June 1, 2020: Staff Return to the Church Office

- Staff will follow the workday guidelines established by the Executive Council

Monday, August 3, 2020: Small Group Ministries Resume

- Small groups will follow all CDC guidelines for physical distancing and each group's number will not exceed 15 gathered people

Sunday, October 4, 2020: In-person Sunday Worship Resumes

- Those gathering for worship will be asked to sit with those they live with or have traveled with, remain 6-feet from other worshippers, wear a mask at all times unless seated, and refrain from singing.
- **Reminder: In-person services may cease at any time if an unsafe rise in COVID19 cases takes place.**

Expectations of the Congregation:

While the above dates bring relief in some ways, as there is now a targeted light at the end of the tunnel, it comes with a great hesitation, worry, and hope. With that being named, the following guidelines are being implemented as a safe and purposeful way to join back together. 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: Beginning Sunday, October 4th at 10:30am, worship will resume inside the Sanctuary. 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 unless they are seated. 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, attendees are asked to remove one disinfecting wipe from the can located in each pew end and wipe down the surfaces touched during the service. The used wipes can then be disposed of, along with the Communion containers, as attendees exit the Sanctuary. 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 but may be removed once attendees are seated for worship.

Sanctuary Seating and Fellowship: Safe distances are key. Seating will take place every other pew, as notated by the blue tape at each pew entrance point. Congregants will 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. 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 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. 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. 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 package. 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 drank 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. Remember, while you are seated in your pew your mask may be removed, but if you need to get up and leave the sanctuary for any reason, please put your mask back on while you move about the church campus.

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. 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 feet apart 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. 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 will 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 and 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. 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. 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 “at risk”

demographics, as well as the ministries of our church though 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 the heartbeat of our ministry during the week. As we slowly get things moving again, it will be vital for those visiting the office to not congregate in the lobby of the office. Our chairs will be 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 commence as school starts for the fall semester of the 2020-2021 school year and will take place every Wednesday morning at 10am 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.*