

July 28, 2020

Dear Siblings in Christ,

During the COVID-19 pandemic, loving our neighbor includes protecting their health and well-being.

After extensive consideration and research, the Task Force to Reopen St. Paul's recommended to Congregation Council at the July Council meeting that St. Paul's remain closed for in-person worship at this time.

Although we all long to be together, the pandemic continues to pose a global public health risk as well as significant health risks to our members. The Task Force and Council remain committed to the Christian calling to love our neighbor and we will be continuously assessing the risks so that when we finally can gather together it will be safely and inclusively.

The following update summarizes what we have done, what we learned from the congregational survey, and what we are doing now.

This pandemic has proven that St. Paul's is more than a building. Let us continue to pray for St. Paul's and one another as this journey unfolds. May the words of Jesus, "And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age" comfort and strengthen us in these challenging and uncertain times.

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact us.

In Christ,

Helene Roth
Church Council President

William Henderson, Jr.
Task Force Chairperson

The Rev. Kris Peterson
Bridge Pastor

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

COVID-19 Precautions and Reopening Update – July 28, 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a global public health risk impacting our ability to gather safely in ways that include everyone, St. Paul's Congregation Council remains committed to the Christian calling to love our neighbor by taking action to limit the spread of COVID-19.

What We Have Done

- All in-person events, including worship services, were suspended on March 13, 2020.
- Virtual Worship was initiated and continues to provide a meaningful way to gather safely. Other meetings and events have also been consistently offered remotely.
- A Task Force to Re-Open St. Paul's was formed to monitor pandemic-related guidance from public and church-related sources, to gather feedback from the congregation, to prepare a re-opening protocol, and to inform and advise the Congregation Council as plans and decisions were made.
- The Task Force conducted a survey of the congregation and 91 responses were received. The Task Force thoroughly reviewed survey feedback and provided responses and recommendations to the Congregation Council.

What We Learned from the Survey

- 90% of respondents expressed some level of concern about exposure to COVID-19 if St. Paul's were to reopen for in-person worship services.
- 60% of respondents would return for in-person worship with guidance from medical and scientific experts as well as adherence to state and local mandates concerning indoor gatherings.
- The survey showed that respondents were concerned that proper steps would be taken to reduce risk of infection by, at a minimum, adhering to physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting the church and mandating mask wearing.
- Most of the respondents (80%) feel connected to St. Paul's via virtual worship services and Zoom meetings; however, most respondents feel "it is not the same" as seeing church family in person.
- Most respondents miss worshipping together, gathering for fellowship, live music, seeing their church friends and our choirs.
- The majority of respondents want St. Paul's to exercise caution in establishing reopening plans.

What We are Doing Now

- In-person Sunday worship services remain suspended. A reopening date for indoor worship services remains undetermined.
- The Task Force to Re-Open St. Paul's will remain active for the duration of the pandemic.
- The Task Force has developed a protocol for when we can re-open that includes guidelines for members attending worship. St. Paul's has purchased and installed hand sanitizer stations and established physical distancing in the sanctuary.
- The Worship and Music Committee and Task Force is in the process of purchasing equipment to enable live streaming of worship services from the sanctuary.
- The use of church facilities by outside groups will remain limited to purposes deemed essential (e.g. blood drives, recovery group meetings).

Church Council Commitments to the Congregation

- We will abide by state and local guidelines and follow the guidance of medical and scientific experts.
- We will strive to reopen in ways that include everyone.
- We will live out "love your neighbor" through a commitment to physical safety, health and well-being.