

A Plan for Returning to Indoor Worship at Zion Lutheran Church

As my students in our Ecclesiastes Bible Study are learning, the anxiety and solicitude and planning of humans are vain and empty. Ecclesiastes teaches that we should be content with the Word and Work of God, so that we are not presumptuous about anything except what the Word of God prescribes or God's Work requires. Or as the common parlance has it: no matter how carefully a project is planned, the best laid plans of mice and men will have something go wrong. So it is not without irony and a knowledge that all of this can change at a moment's notice, that our committee for reopening the building has approved this plan for returning to in-person indoor worship. Our committee would like to thank First Lutheran Church of Gladstone, MI whose plan for in-person indoor worship was the main touchstone and in places wholesale verbatim inspiration for the plan you see below.

Our insurance recommends a 30 day notice of any plan to open our building for in-person indoor worship, so that our membership has ample time to review the guidelines and expectations. We will be available for responses and questions during that 30 days.

So please take the time to read this plan in its entirety. Please also note that this means the earliest possible day we could start in-person worship at Zion, as of the posting of this plan, is **Sunday, November 8th**. (If there are no major upsets that make that date impossible. If we cannot open our building at that time, these guidelines shall hold for such a time as we can unless otherwise notified or appended.)

The first thing to note is that Zion Lutheran Church is not and has never been closed. Only our building has been closed. The Church, however, has remained vibrant both in its service to the community and in its worship. We have remained open and creatively worshipping in alternative and safer ways than in-person indoor worship, and we will continue to offer these safer forms of worship even if and after we also offer in-person worship again until such time as the worldwide pandemic has run its full course. Our committee heartily recommends these safer forms of worship to you first. We have Zoom worship on Sundays at 10:30am; outdoor parking lot worships are, weather permitting, on Saturday evenings at 5pm. We also will occasionally offer parking lot Sunday worships at 11:15am as long as weather allows.

The second thing to note is that we cannot return to in-person indoor worship without your help! In order to do this as safely as possible and to minimize risk, we will need your assistance both in following these guidelines and as enforcers to make sure others are following them as well. We will also need volunteers to help disinfect our worship spaces, run a power-point presentation, man the contact tracing check-in station, and many other various tasks as they may arise.

In-person indoor worship at this time is still the most unsafe form of worship available to us. Current guidelines recommend outdoor or digital worship as the safest form of gathering. So do not feel like you need to return to our church building right away. It is up to your discretion if you attend, but we recommend you refrain if you are in a higher-

risk category such as: a suppressed immune system, Heart Condition, Diabetes, Obesity, COPD, or other medical conditions that would put you at additional risk. If you are age 69 and older, we also recommend you do not attend in-person worship. If you choose to attend even though you are in one of these high-risk categories, you do so at your own risk. Please consider worshipping with us in a different way. Ask a family member to help you get set up with Zoom, or if you do not have a computer available you can always join in to our Zoom meeting by phone. Contact our office for directions how to do this.

By participating in in-person indoor worship, you are making the choice to worship with us in Zion Lutheran's building. We hope and pray that you will be respectful of others, and protect yourself and those who will worship with you. By joining us in in-person worship you are accepting the risk to worship with us in person and will not hold Zion Lutheran Church or its Pastor, Staff or Officers responsible should you contract a virus and/or become sick. Thank you for being a responsible worshiper and for following all the guidelines below to make in-person worship as safe as possible.

For the safety and respect of others, please do not attend in-person worship if you have had contact with anyone confirmed to have Covid-19 in the last two weeks, or if you have traveled out of the area in the last two weeks. (This includes a trip to Escanaba. As of this writing, Delta County currently has a high infection risk level of 98% according to the COVID-19 risk assessment tool at <https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/>)

Please also do not attend if you have had any of these symptoms this week: Temperature over 100.4 F, cough or sore throat, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure in your chest, congestion, runny nose, significant mucus or phlegm, loss of smell or taste, loss of appetite, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache or chills, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, spots or lesions, or frostbite-like rash especially on the foot. If you are sick, stay home!

The following conditions and restrictions apply to in-person indoor worship:

Masks are required for all people wishing to participate in indoor activities at Zion. We will have masks available if you need one. Masks must cover the nose and the mouth when worn. Wearing a mask only over your mouth or down by your chin is like wearing no mask at all. Masks must be worn for the duration of the worship service, except for the brief moment it may take to safely consume communion.

When we open our building for indoor worship, Augustana hall will not be available for fellowship or any other use. We cannot safely or legally provide a fellowship nor coffee hour opportunity at this time. If our building is open for worship, it will only be open for worship alone. The doors will not open until ten minutes prior to the service time. And all worshipers are to leave directly following the close of service.

The front doors will remain closed so that we can control traffic. Everyone must enter by the back (parking lot) door, where there will be a check-in station for contact tracing and to make sure that all attendants have access to a mask. If you have mobility issues and must use the elevator to enter our building, it is acceptable to knock on the front door and we will send a representative to check you in, make sure you have masks and ensure that the elevator has been disinfected since its last use.

Worshipers will be assigned to socially-distanced seats in the order that they arrive, starting with the frontmost pew and ending with the backmost. Normal accustomed

spots and pew preferences cannot be honored at this time. Worshipers may drop their offering in a basket provided at the door to the sanctuary, and pick up a plastic bag containing communion elements, before proceeding to their indicated seat. We will do everything we can to minimize people's movement within the sanctuary once they are seated. Worshipers will remain in their assigned seats for the duration of the service. At the close of the service, worshipers will exit the building in the reverse order in which they were seated, starting with the backmost pew and ending with the frontmost. There will be no liturgical processions or recessions during this time.

Families who live together will sit side by side, but there must be at least six feet between each group. Individuals from different households who do not already regularly have physical contact and/or proximity with each other cannot sit together. Pews have been marked off with string and tape to indicate proper distances.

Legally, in the State of Michigan, we cannot currently exceed thirty five persons in our sanctuary at this time. Most organizations and events, including funerals, are still limited to 10 persons. However, there is an exception for church worship (and worship only!) per Executive Order 2020-176 (section 8), worship gatherings in the UP can have indoor events up to 25% of maximum capacity, or 250 people, whichever is smaller. Our building reopening committee has determined that with the constraints of social distancing, this capacity is about 35 people. However, in practice we may have to have a smaller attendance cap depending on how family groups are distributed.

If for some reason we should exceed our legal operating capacity, we encourage you to join us in the digital or parking lot worship that will follow. We are working on a way to use the FM transmitter we currently have to broadcast in-person worship to the parking lot in the event of an overflow crowd. It is not our intention to have to turn away anyone from hearing and experiencing God's mercy! And we sincerely apologize, for our hands are bound in this matter, and we can do no other.

We will provide hand-sanitizer at the sanctuary doors. Please make sure to practice good hand-hygiene while attending worship. Although we all want to greet one another, there will be no hand shaking or hugging at this time. We recommend greeting one another with a holy bow to show reverence and God's peace.

Due to the limitations of our cleaning capabilities, the bathrooms will not be available for use during indoor worship. Please go before you go! In the event of an absolute emergency, we can accommodate exactly one (1) person of each gender to use a bathroom. After each bathroom has been used once, it is no longer available until our cleaning staff can disinfect it on Monday.

The heating in the sanctuary is a forced air system. This means that we cannot safely run the heater while people are occupying the building. It has been shown that forced air is an expedient way to spread virus particles throughout the room. Regardless of the filtration capabilities of the system, the problem is the air blowing directly upon gathered people which spreads moist air droplets about. We will run the heat prior to the service to heat the space to the best of our ability, but the system will be shut off during our worship. **Please wear a coat!**

There will be no bulletins nor worship books available for in-person worship. This is to minimize surface contact, and the passing around of materials from person to person

which could be vehicles for infection. We will provide a power-point presentation for people to follow the liturgy during the service.

There will be no singing nor speaking in unison. Studies show that public singing with or without masks is worse than coughing on someone without a mask. In fact, singing is like being exposed to one long sustained cough, and it quickly exceeds the threshold for maximum saturation of virus particles for infection. There is no safe way to include singing with in-person indoor worship at this time. Speaking in unison is also discouraged while indoors for the same reason. So we ask that during these indoor services you will refrain from speaking aloud the Lord's Prayer, the Confession of Faith, and other cherished Christian responses of faith that we can and will speak during our more remote forms of worship. Instead, as with any in-person music we may have, we ask that you hold the words in your heart.

Communion will be celebrated using prepackaged kits (received on your way in the door) that contain a wafer and grape juice. We have already begun this practice with some of our parking lot worships, and we will proceed in the same manner for indoor worship. The celebrant for communion will first read aloud the prayers and words of institution, and then the community will take communion in unison with the words, "This is the body of Christ given for you," followed by the words, "This is the blood of Christ Shed for you." Please hold any amens or verbal responses in your heart. We also ask you to do your best to stagger your consumption of the elements to reduce as much as possible the time that people are unmasked together in the worship space.

The service time for indoor worship on Sundays will be 9:30am. This will accommodate Zoom Worship at 10:30, and occasional parking lot services at 11:15am.

If we determine that Saturday services will move indoors, they will take place in Augustana Hall and the Sanctuary will be closed. There is not enough time between Saturday evening and Sunday morning to accommodate two indoor worships meeting in the same space. In this case, we will also work on a way to have the FM transmitter running for those who do not feel safe coming indoors. Saturday will always be attendable in the parking lot. But for those who may be indoors, all the rest of the Sunday rules apply to the space set up in Augustana Hall. Since Saturday worship is traditionally smaller in numbers, there will not be another Saturday evening time of worship in addition to the normal 5pm.

Our reopening the building for in-person indoor worship is contingent upon risk factors and the general safety of the community. **If any of the following conditions arise before Sunday, November 8th, we will not open our building. If they occur after Sunday, November 8th, we will close our building again.**

- 1.** If any Schoolcraft county schools close or go to online-only learning because of an outbreak.
- 2.** If the risk-level for infection in Schoolcraft county rises above 65% for a gathering of 25 people or more as determined by the COVID-19 risk assessment tool at <https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/> **As of this writing that risk level is at 20%**
- 3.** If the governor of Michigan moves the UP back a stage in its reopening, or in any way lifts or nullifies the exemption for UP worshipping communities to gather in sizes larger than 10; or if there are any other state or regional lock-downs or stay at home orders

that would effectively do the same thing coming from the legislature or any other law making body.

4. If any indoor activity at Zion Lutheran Church's building should become associated in any way with an outbreak despite our best practices in following of these guidelines.

5. If, for whatever reason, our council should determine it is no longer safe or feasible to move forward with in-person indoor worship, taking into account recommendations from local officials, and taking into consideration the safety of our congregation and its members.

If we are not able to Open on Sunday November 8th or if we must close again in the future, the building reopening committee will reconsider this plan and establish a new date for opening the building if any of the following conditions are met:

1. If the number of new COVID-19 Cases in Schoolcraft county has declined steadily for at least 14 days.

2. If the risk-level for infection in Schoolcraft county drops and remains for at least 14 days below 20% for a gathering of 25 people or more as determined by the COVID-19 risk assessment tool at <https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/>

3. If a vaccine becomes widely available and effective and the health care system of Schoolcraft County is able to safely care for all patients and rapid diagnostic testing capacity in our area is sufficient to test, at a minimum, all people with COVID-19 symptoms, including mild cases, as well as their close contacts and those in essential roles.

4. If there is new legislation or executive order or other such rule of law that progresses the UP into a further stage of reopening, or if there are further guidelines or statutes specifically in regard to gatherings in church buildings. Please note: this does not include when Governor Whitmer's Executive orders expire in 20 days. When the power goes out of a traffic light governing at an intersection, common sense dictates we are to treat it as a stop sign. A vacuum of orders does not make a positive green light for everyone. This condition applies only to positively worded legislation that indicates safety and order for church gatherings.

5. If, for whatever reason, our council should determine that taking into account recommendations from local officials, and taking into consideration the safety of our congregation and its members, and considering all the risks, restrictions and costs beholden to us as laid out in this plan above, that it is worth it and necessary, all things considered, to move forward with in-person indoor worship.



Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Grace and peace to you in these glorious Autumn days! Last week, Governor Whitmer announced that because of rising COVID-19 cases, the Upper Peninsula was being returned to Phase 4. Hardly moments later, the Supreme Court of Michigan declared that the Governor's ongoing emergency orders were unconstitutional. Together, as the church, we ask the good Lutheran question, "What does this mean?" Both our Northern Wisconsin and our Upper Peninsula congregations now find themselves in the same confusing space where the Governor has issued orders without the legal capacity to enforce them. In our Lutheran polity, the enforcement of any behaviors rests with each congregation's council. It is the work of each congregation's leadership together to discern and decide what their guidelines will be for when in person worship will happen and how it will happen given the realities of an ongoing pandemic. Resources for all that needs to be considered are on our synod website. That being said, those in Michigan have only to look at their Wisconsin neighbors to see what happened when the orders of the Governor were ignored. Wisconsin hospitals are filling up, case numbers are rising exponentially, and many congregations have wisely pulled back from, or refrained from engaging in, in-person inside worship. I write to encourage you to raise the bar from what is legal to what is advisable. Do not plan on in-person, inside worship unless the numbers in your county are flat or decreasing. If worship is held in person, please continue to require masks, especially in indoor spaces, and practice physical distancing from each other, which is only possible if numbers are limited in your indoor spaces. The guidelines that have been put forth by the Wisconsin Council of Churches still hold true regardless of any executive order or constitutional challenges. And these best practices also continue to be advisable for your movement in and through your community. Masks and physical distancing, while not fool proof, are the best weapons we currently have to slow the spread of the virus. I know that our situation feels like it's getting worse. We are weary and feeling the strain. But there is good news! Those who study the emotional impact of disasters have noticed patterns in how populations respond during times of trial. At about six months into a disaster, there is a period called the "Disillusionment Phase." I believe this is where many people are currently. But that's not the good news. The good news is this phase has an end point. A day will come when we will move from the Disillusionment Phase, marked by weariness and anxiety, to the Reconstruction Phase, which is marked by new creativity, energy, and a coming to terms with the changes that we have witnessed. (Check out this article for more.)



So, please be encouraged. Even as we are in the thick of it, know that this too shall pass. As we are all feeling stretched thin, please be gentle with each other. Be even more patient, even when you don't feel like it. And let your pastoral leader and your councils know that their efforts to lead and decide and consider so many things are deeply appreciated. They are doing the best they can to keep you safe and still embrace you with the presence of Christ through the community of faith. If you feel yourself being pushy, relax. If you are tempted to cast judgment, reconsider. A day is coming soon when we will feel creative and energized, ready to begin again as we move into a new future of being church together.

Yours in Christ,
 Rev. Katherine Finegan
 Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod

Sunday, October 11, 2020 is "**Pastor Appreciation Day**" Let's celebrate all of our Pastors and Licensed Lay Ministers as the wonderful leaders and friends they are to us all, especially during this time.

Quilts and Kits

Lutheran World Relief Shipping date is Saturday October 10, 2020, 9-10:30am. **Thank you** Mary and Jim Ansell for volunteering to take our boxes to Gladstone.

JOIN US!! For Parking Lot worship on Saturday evenings, 5:00pm and for Sunday morning worship via ZOOM at 10:30am and on Sunday, October 11th, we will meet in the parking lot for in person worship at 11:15am. Communion will be served at both of these worship services.

Join us for Bible Study



The Monday night Bible study group will be and 4th Mondays, starting Sept. 14th. Pr. study on the book of Ecclesiastes. We will meet in person in Augustana Hall. Be sure to wear your mask and social distance. If you have any questions about this opportunity for study, please contact the office.

meeting at 6:30, every 2nd Tommy will be leading our

Gifts to our congregation have been given in memory of

Carole Johnson

Kathy Peterson—Back Pack Buddies

Doris Ribblet—Back Pack Buddies

Lila Panek—Memorial

Tom, Karin, Elsa, Anna—Nordic Fund

David MacGregor

Kathy Peterson—Back Pack Buddies

Patricia Hyland

Kathy Peterson—Back Pack Buddies

Victor Cole

Dan & Kathy McDonough—Roofing Fund

David & Gloria McGuire—Memorial

Amy Johnson

Kathy Peterson—Back Pack Buddies

Helen Lynts

Joanne Nelson—Memorial

L. David Vaughn

Joel & Sherri Krause—Pew Cushions

Norma Johnson

Joel & Sherri Krause—Pew Cushions



Victor Cole, Carole Johnson and Helen Lynts.
May God's comforting arms surround and comfort you.

CORRECTION: The Butterfly panel in Augustana Hall was donated by the Sunday School in honor of Lois Graham.

Circle News

The Circles are able to start their monthly meetings. If you are not a member of a circle and would be interested in joining one, please contact any one of the following ladies for more information:

Sarah Circle—Liz Macklem
Joy Circle—Donna Gauthier
Ruth Circle—Verda Kreuzwieser
Hope Circle—Sheila Clark

The **Sarah Circle** meets on Mondays at 1:00pm

The **Joy Circle** meets on the second Thursday at 10:00am.

The **Ruth Circle** meets on the third Wednesday at 11:30am.

The **Hope Circle** meets on the third Thursday at 6:00pm.

Be sure to check with your Circle Leader to find out if and where your circle will be meeting.

Upcoming Scripture Readings

October 4 —Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:7-15, Philippians 3:4b-14,
Matthew 21:33-46

October 11— Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 25:1-9, Psalm 23, Philippians 4:1-9, Matthew 22:1-14

October 18— Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 45:1-7, Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13], 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Matthew 22:15-22

October 25—Reformation Sunday

Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 46, Romans 3:19-28, John 8:31-36



The congregation provides Bibles for all Third graders in our congregation. This year Nicholas Gauthier, Aiyonne Swisher and Courtney Larson will receive a Bible. Parents should contact the church office to make arrangements to pick up their child's Bible.

All Saints Sunday is November 1st. This year celebrate, but there will still be Angels to have pass this year and medallions for those A letter will be sent to family members this special remembrance.



we won't be able to honor those who who were baptized. regarding picking up



Thanksgiving Baskets

We are once again filling **six baskets for Thanksgiving.** Items needed are: turkeys, potatoes, vegetables, stuffing mix, milk, coffee, rolls, butter or margarine, cranberry sauce or jelly, frozen pies or some other dessert, napkins, aluminum roasting pans, candy, nuts and fruit. Please call the church office if you are able to help. All items need to be at the church by Sunday, November 22nd. They will be delivered on that day. Also if you can help with delivery, please contact the office. Safety protocol has been put in place for safe delivery.



Good Neighbors is looking for volunteers to "ring the bell" for the Salvation Army this year. Bell ringing will start Saturday November 7th until Saturday December 19th. There will stations set up at Jack's Fresh Market and Tractor Supply. The times are usually at 1-2 hour intervals. If you are able to help, please call the church office and we can set up a time.



My Dear Quilter Friends,

I was happy to read in the Beacon that you Quilters are back on Mondays to do what you like to do.

I wish I was with you. I think about you every Monday and can just picture you at work.

I'm still enjoying the quilt you gave me. I'm proud to show it to my new friends.

I'm doing good here, but I wish I was back home. No place like home.

Love,

Betty

News from the Northern Great Lakes Synod

A Year of Discovery The Northern Great Lakes Synod declared May 2020 to May 2021 as a “Year of Discovery.” It is a call for our synod members to better understand the history, heritage and culture of Native American peoples, to reflect on the historical content of the Doctrine of Discovery, and to engage in dialogue with Native American siblings. To learn more, go to the synod homepage (www.nglsynod.org) to find a variety of resources to begin your study. We encourage individuals and groups within congregations to engage in this “Year of Discovery.” If you wish for further guidance or resources on how to do something in your congregation, please contact Pastor Jim Duehring at the synod office (jduehring@nglsynod.org). We have members from the “Year of Discovery” Task Force who could be available to assist you in your, “Year of Discovery.”

Good News from Beirut

Three 40-foot shipping containers filled with thousands of mission quilts and school, personal and baby care kits, previously reported as destroyed in the August 4 explosions at the port of Beirut, Lebanon, have been found intact. The containers containing the quilts and kits were stored behind a concrete block building, which protected them from the blast. The quilts and kits have been transferred to a warehouse, from where they will be distributed to refugees living in Lebanon, principally from Syria and the Palestinian territories. In addition to distributing the quilts and kits, Lutheran World Relief is also working to address immense shelter needs in the wake of the explosion, helping poorer families to repair and return to their homes.

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Choir Director: Rebecca Peterson
Sunday School Coordinator: Sheila Clark
Custodian: Pat Toennesen

Congregation Council:

Rick Pink, President
Cathy Knudson, Vice President
Kay MacGregor, Secretary
Marie Bellville, Treasurer
Cyndee Miske, Financial Secretary
John Barry
Jo-Nell Berger
Naomi Fletcher
Linda Levin
Kathy McDonough
Donna Mott
Teddy Nelson
Cindy Olli
Jim Russey



A congregation of the Northern Great Lakes Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.