

## COVID Children's and Youth Ministry Policies

### *Sharing and living a changeless Gospel with a changing world*

Though our world this year has certainly changed compared to previous times, we will continue to connect believers with each other, the church, and our Savior through the power of the changeless Gospel.

This guidance document has been designed for use in conjunction with the overall policy of First Lutheran Church and local public health directives. Advice of the local public health units must be followed, even in the event that it contradicts this document. This document will be reviewed and modified as applicable when COVID-19 restrictions can be lifted and/or amended to reflect new advice as it is given.

While the focus of this policy is on maintaining healthy operational measures for youth and children's ministry at First Lutheran, please note that every effort will be made to uphold a welcoming and caring environment for our children, students, families, and volunteers.

Though we will attempt to take proactive preventative measures to ensure safety and cleanliness, we acknowledge that risk of exposure is possible and may result in temporary dismissal or omission from ministry events. All public activities, including participation here at First Lutheran, remain at your own risk.

We strive to work closely with our families, local health department, and state and national government to safeguard and protect our children and youth as closely as possible, trusting ultimately in the Almighty God who guards our steps. We know the Lord is our refuge and strength, an "ever present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1)

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### General Policies

We will diligently assess each ministry event and consider ways to maintain high levels of safety. Our primary goal is safety, but we also strive to provide a welcoming, caring, Christ-centered environment for our students. The nature of our varied ministry means that an exact blueprint is not possible, but the general principals we will adhere to include the following:

- **Encourage physical/social distancing when possible**
- **Require masks/face coverings for all students over the age of 2, volunteers, parents in the building, and teachers**
- **Necessitate a signed release form for each minor participant prior to attending ministry events**
- **Urge any student or volunteer who is not feeling well or displaying any symptoms to stay home**
- **Increase cleaning and sanitation procedures. Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available throughout the building**
- **Limit activities involving physical contact and sharing of supplies/objects**
- **Minimize touching between students (no hand-holding during prayers, etc.)**
- **Clean high-touch areas frequently**
- **Establish specific entrance/exit doorways for the building**
- **Consider staggered entrance/exit times**
- **Use visual and verbal reminders to practice good hygiene**
- **Affirm students, parents, and leaders that we are making every effort to care for each other**

We recognize that physical distancing between students is often difficult. Because physical distancing is not always possible especially inside the church building, masks/face coverings will be required for all students over the age of 2, volunteers and teachers engaged in children and youth ministry events. Participants are asked to bring their own mask; however, we will have some available if needed.

When setting up spaces, we will attempt to provide spaces where students can be at least 6 feet apart. We will also assess our activities to minimize physical contact and shared objects.

We will make an attempt to use supplies which are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected (i.e. avoiding plush toys). We will clean and disinfect supplies between events. We will attempt to use designated toys and equipment (i.e. balls, toys) for each group or classroom and keep them separate from other groups.

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## **Ministry Specific Policies**

### **Children's Ministry**

Sunday School and Midweek will both resume in-person classes this fall. Sunday School begins August 16<sup>th</sup> and Midweek on September 2<sup>nd</sup> with the following specific guidelines:

- Physical/social distancing rules will be in place; however, since distancing will not always be possible, masks/face coverings will be required to be worn by students over the age of 2, teachers, and parents in the building.
- Children will be separated into grade-specific classrooms. These classes will remain consistent week after week. Students will have limited contact with those in other classes.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available in each classroom and their use, along with handwashing, will be encouraged.
- Students, teachers, and parents will enter the Education Wing through the center west door and exit out the northwest door to establish traffic flow. (Doors will be marked). If participants are in the building for worship prior to or following Sunday School, the internal doors near the elevator will be used to access the Education Wing.
- Congregating in the hallways will be discouraged.
- Any shared supplies (i.e. hand chimes, scissors) will be sanitized following use.
- Students will be encouraged to bring their own Bible and water bottle. Drinking fountains in the building will be turned off.

### **Confirmation**

Confirmation classes for grades 6-8 will begin in-person on September 2<sup>nd</sup> with Orientation on August 26<sup>th</sup> with the following specific guidelines:

- Physical/social distancing rules will be in place; however, since distancing will not always be possible, masks/face coverings will be required to be worn by students, small group leaders, and volunteers.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available in each small group room and the Fellowship Hall and their use, along with handwashing, will be encouraged.

### **Confirmation (cont.)**

- Students, small group guides, and parents will enter the Fellowship Hall through the southwest door and exit out the northwest door to establish traffic flow. (Doors will be marked).
- Seating in the Fellowship Hall will be altered to enable all students to face the same direction and encourage spacing between groups of students.
- Acolytes will resume their candle lighting duties during worship services beginning in October. Students will be placed on the regular acolyte schedule following Confirmation Orientation (9/26).
- Students will be encouraged to bring their own Bible, Small Catechism, and water bottle to events. Drinking fountains in the building will be turned off.
- Regular opportunities to gather for fellowship and service will continue to be made available following these guidelines (when applicable).

### **High School Youth**

Sunday School and Wednesday Youth Nights for grades 9-12 will resume in-person on August 16<sup>th</sup> and September 2<sup>nd</sup>, respectively, with the following specific guidelines:

- Physical/social distancing rules will be in place; however, since distancing will not always be possible, masks/face coverings will be required to be worn by students, and volunteers.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available in the Youth Room and their use, along with handwashing, will be encouraged.
- Students, and volunteers will enter the building through the center west door and exit out the northwest door to establish traffic flow. (Doors will be marked).
- Seating in the Youth Room will be altered to allow more space in between students.
- Games and activities will strive to be no or low-contact and minimize sharing equipment
- Students will be encouraged to bring their own Bible and water bottle to events. Drinking fountains in the building will be turned off.
- Snacks and drinks will not be available unless consumed during an outdoor event.
- Regular opportunities to gather for fellowship and service will continue to be made available following these guidelines (when applicable).

### **Online Options**

We recognize that not all families will feel comfortable returning to in-person ministry events at this time. Though we look forward to when they will join us face-to-face again, we are providing a few options to stay connected and involved from home. Please note that these alternatives are not meant to replace or substitute in-person activities.

**Sunday School** – Children’s Sunday School Take-Home pages will be emailed out each week.

**Confirmation** – Wednesday night lessons will be recorded and posted on the church website on Thursdays with the lesson PowerPoint for students to follow along. Students can still engage with Home Huddles and worship via the Livestream service.