

Pandemic Preparedness Plan

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, MN

Overview

- Gloria Dei Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and volunteers, as well as anyone who uses our facilities. To ensure that, we have developed a Preparedness Plan for response to a pandemic.
- Our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of infection in our Church Building.
- This Pandemic Preparedness Plan includes and describes how we will implement at a minimum the following:
 1. Infection prevention measures - hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
 2. Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons.
 3. Engineering and administrative controls for social distancing.
 4. Housekeeping, including cleaning, disinfecting and decontamination.
 5. Communications and training for staff and volunteers necessary to implement the plan and ensure effective ongoing adherence to the plan.

Preparedness Plan Details

- Infection prevention measures. Hygiene and respiratory etiquette will include:
 1. Handwashing frequently, for at least 20 seconds.
 2. Frequent use of hand sanitizer.
 3. Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue.
 4. Avoiding touching your face, nose, and mouth.
- Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons. Screening will include temperature checks and symptom page questions before coming to work. If you develop symptoms or become sick while at home, do not come to work. Contact the Lead Pastor and Congregational President. If you develop symptoms or become sick while at work go home immediately and contact the Lead Pastor and Congregational President. The Congregational President will follow the plan outline and reference a decision tree when approaching each situation.
- Provide applicable information: about the infection information, isolation/quarantine terms, available resources, and applicable compensation policies. Upon notification of an infected staff member, we will:
 1. Open an incident report.
 2. Identify & isolate staff workspaces and potential other affected areas.
 3. Notify affected co-staff about potential exposure.
 4. Notify additional staff and volunteers as necessary.
 5. Clean & disinfect affected areas.
 6. Ensure that the identity of sick/potentially sick staff remains confidential.

Building and Ventilation Protocols

- General Building Conditions. Prior to opening the church building again, we have:
 1. Followed established protocols for starting mechanical, electrical, plumbing, life-safety, and other systems after non-use.
 2. Assessed the building for indications of pest and vermin infestation, and found no need to consult a pest-control professional.
 3. Reviewed CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>).
 4. Inspected windows, fans, and air conditioning, following CDC recommendations. New air filters will be placed every six months and filter will be HEPA quality. Ceiling fans will remain off. Windows can be opened.
- Day-To-Day Operations: Once systems are in a safe operational status, we will ensure the following practices and protocols are maintained:
 1. Continuously maximize fresh-air into the work and communal spaces.
 2. Eliminate air recirculation as much as possible.
 3. Minimize air-flow from blowing across people. The ventilation system and ceiling fans will remain off during in-person worship. Windows in sanctuary do open and can be opened during in-person worship.
 4. Air Conditioning temperature will be reduced 3-4 degrees cooler than usual prior to in-person worship and the system will be shut off during worship. The air conditioning system can be turned back on two hours after in-person worship has ended.
 5. Ensure the office space at Gloria Dei provides adequate space for each occupant and that the ventilation system for the office space provides proper air exchange.
 6. Staff can choose to open windows and close office doors as needed.
 7. The main office door will remain locked at this time.
 8. Supplementing the ventilation-system with the use of portable HEPA filter units will not be done at this time. If future regulations require HEPA units, this will be addressed.
 9. Keep systems running longer hours (24/7 if possible) to enhance the ability to filter contaminants out of the air.
 10. Maintain relative humidity levels of RH 40-60%. The current levels have averaged 40-50%.
 11. Gloria Dei does not have a flush system or cycle on the controls of the HVAC system.
 12. Check and maintain HVAC system as advised.
 13. Consult an HVAC professional or the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers to ensure proper ventilation is provided, and ventilation-systems are properly maintained. See ASHRAE's COVID-19 Preparedness Resources (<https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources>)

Worship

- Our primary opportunity for worship will continue to be on Sunday mornings via radio, TV, and Facebook Live. We encourage most people to continue worshipping from home. Beginning August 23, those who desire to gather will once again be welcome to join us in the sanctuary with social distancing guidelines and mask wearing protocols being followed. The congregation will be asked to refrain from singing with worship leaders/cantors.
- For other worship services (baptisms, weddings, funerals), we encourage those to be celebrated outdoors if possible. Outdoor services must maintain 6 ft social distancing guidelines between immediate families, with no more than 250 people present.
- For indoor worship services, occupancy of the worship space is not to exceed 50% of capacity, with social distancing guidelines in place. Only 1/2 of the pews will be in use and there must be at least six feet of distance between immediate families in each pew. This will result in our capacity being approximately 150 people. Overflow seating can be utilized in the narthex if necessary.
- Those over the age of 65 and individuals with a compromised health condition are strongly encouraged not to attend any worship services in person because they are more susceptible to contracting the coronavirus. This is for their own safety as well as the safety of those gathered.
- Anyone showing any symptoms of illness, or anyone who has a household member who is sick or showing symptoms of illness should not attend; this includes pastors or other leaders who are sick or showing signs of illness. If someone arrives showing signs of illness (fever, persistent dry cough, etc.), they will be asked to go home.
- No social gatherings of any kind will be allowed either before or after worship services in the building. People will be instructed to arrive and depart expediently.

Office Use

- Limit the number of people in the office to maintain social distancing.
- The office will remain closed to congregational members “stopping by.”
- Members wishing to meet/see staff will need to make an appointment before coming to the church.
- All meetings with visitors/staff will need to be on a centrally accessible calendar to enable other staff to adjust their schedule if they wish to avoid being in the office at that time.
- All will be encouraged to meet in the Fellowship Hall or Fireside Room instead of the individual offices to allow for further social distancing.

Hygiene and Cleaning of Facilities

- Sanitation: The building will be thoroughly sanitized before and after each worship service, including all entryways and doors. Documentation will be provided for when all cleanings take place. (See Appendix for CDC guidelines for cleaning.)
- Hymnals will be removed from pews.
- Offering plates and other items will not be passed person to person.
- Children's "quiet bags" will not be made available.
- Hand sanitizer will be available at all entryways.
- All in attendance will be required to wear a mask, except worship leaders when they are speaking. Disposable masks will be made available for those who do not bring a mask or cloth face covering from home. Masks or cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, per CDC guidelines.
- Disposable gloves will be made available for those who are cleaning and for anyone who may desire to wear them.
- Doors will be propped open and one-way traffic patterns will be introduced to ensure social distancing. The south entrance to the building will be the primary entrance/exit. The east entrance will remain locked. The side aisles of the sanctuary will be used when entering. The center aisle will be used when exiting. Those to be seated at the front of the sanctuary will enter first and leave last. Ushers will assist with maintaining proper social distance.
- Ventilation will be increased as much as possible, opening windows and doors, as weather permits.
- Restroom Use: Only one person will be allowed to enter a restroom at a time, unless members of the same immediate family. A marking of some kind will be placed on the floor outside of the restroom to indicate where people should stand in line to wait to use the restroom, maintaining 6-foot distance from each other.
- Pastors/worship leaders will be required to wear a mask at all times except when they are speaking. They will also remain more than 6 feet from the congregation at all times.

Holy Communion

- Beginning in September, Holy Communion will be offered in the sanctuary each Saturday at 5:30 p.m. The above building occupancy limits, social distancing guidelines, and sanitation procedures will be followed. Sign up for these services will be provided online. The elements for Communion will be prepared ahead of time while wearing a mask and gloves. The elements will be placed in each pew. The pastor will lead the Communion service from the chancel and will not hand the elements directly to the communicants. The worship space and items used for Communion will be sanitized between each service.
- If demand for in person Communion services grows beyond the capacity of these services each month, we will consider additional services as needed.
- The sanctuary will be open for personal prayer and reflection at designated times during the week, following occupancy and social distancing guidelines.

Singing/Choirs

- Because singing has been shown to increase the amount of droplets produced, thus increasing the potential spread of the coronavirus, congregational and choral singing will not be allowed.
- The pastor(s), a cantor, or soloist may sing, provided they are at least 12 feet from others. The same rule applies for wind instrument performances.

Other Considerations

- Greeting: People will be instructed to not greet each other with touching, maintaining social distance of at least 6 feet with those outside of their immediate family.
- Children: Special attention will be given to children to make sure social distancing is practiced. Parents will be encouraged to speak with their children before coming to the facility to let them know that things will be different.

Contact Tracing

- A sign-in sheet will be kept at the entrance to the building. Anyone attending an activity or worship service at the church will be asked to provide their name and phone number, which will be written down by a greeter.
- If a person present at an event tests positive for COVID-19, church staff will contact others who were present at the time.
- Names and phone numbers will not be disclosed to the public or used for any other purposes.
- Contact information will be kept for one month, then destroyed.

Implementation and Communication

- It is the responsibility of the pastors and church council to communicate these guidelines to the congregation as well as any others who may use the facility.
- These guidelines will be made available both electronically through email to our members and to the public on our website. A physical copy will be posted at each entrance to the building.
- These guidelines will be communicated to anyone who wishes to use the facility for a wedding, funeral, or baptism by the staff member coordinating that event. This will be done both verbally and by providing either a physical or electronic copy to the party using the facility.
- These guidelines are subject to change as local conditions allow.

Appendix A – Guidance for developing an Employer Preparedness Plan General

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Coronavirus (COVID-19) –
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Coronavirus –
www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus

State of Minnesota: COVID-19 response – <https://mn.gov/covid19>

Faith-Based Communities

CDC: Resources for Community and Faith-based Leaders

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

CDC: Resources for Large Community Events & Mass Gatherings

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>

MDH: Community and Faith-based Organizations Guidance

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/communities.html>

MDH: Guidance for Faith-Based Communities Considering In-Person Services

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaithserv.pdf>

MDH: Guidance on Hosting Faith-Based Services in Parking Lots

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaithpark.pdf>

MDH: Guidance for Visiting People at Home

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/visitingathome.pdf>

MDH: Ramadan 2020 and COVID-19

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guideramadan.pdf> 10 Last updated:
05/23/20 – 12:00pm

Businesses

CDC: Resources for businesses and employers – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html

CDC: General business frequently asked questions – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

CDC: Building/business ventilation – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

MDH: Businesses and employers: COVID-19 –

www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html

MDH: Health screening checklist –

www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf

MDH: Materials for businesses and employers –

www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED): COVID-19 information and resources – <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/>

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI): Updates related to COVID-19 –
www.dli.mn.gov/updates

Federal OSHA – www.osha.gov

AIHA Back to Work Safely <https://www.backtoworksafely.org/>

Handwashing

MDH: Handwashing video translated into multiple languages –

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html

CDC: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html 11

MDH: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html

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