



Resuming Services and Offering Holy Communion at St. Paul Lutheran, Green Bay during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose

When *Safer at Home* first went into effect, many of us had mental images of all returning at once to our churches in celebration when it was lifted. Our state's *Safer at Home* plan has been lifted, and we are indeed eager to come back to worship in person and to receive Communion as soon as possible. At the same time, love for our neighbor and our community leads us to pay careful attention to the continuing advice of health experts concerning things like social distancing, hand-washing, and the vulnerability of high risk people among us. We need a little bit of time yet to figure out how to resume services safely. When we do, there will be some temporary restrictions still in place.

Safety Matters

- Though *Safer at Home* is no longer in effect, it is still recommended by health officials that **high risk people** and **people with a fever or a cough** stay away from public places. We at St. Paul will leave it to the discretion of each individual to determine if they are able to come to church.
- It is still recommended by health officials that people wear **masks** in public settings. We at St. Paul will leave it to the discretion of each individual to determine if they will wear a mask when coming to church.
- Six feet **social distancing** will continue to be in effect at church.

Many of us have different points of view as to the safety measures being encouraged by health officials. This is not surprising, since even our government leaders are struggling to come to agreement. Let's remember who we are, God's dearly loved children, through faith in Jesus. Love is key for navigating our way through this. Love and respect and obedience for state and local leaders - even if we don't agree with all they say - is in keeping with the Fourth Commandment and Romans 13. We also need to show love to our fellow members, who may be more or less sensitive than we are to the safety measures currently being encouraged.

After careful discussion by our elders and church council, here's what we are planning to do at St. Paul.

- After Memorial Day pastors will begin offering **private Communion** for those who request it. See below for more details.
- A target date of **June 14** has been set as the time when we will resume **on-site worship** with limited numbers of people at services. See below for more details.
- A **pandemic committee** is being formed to think through procedures to implement at church in order to keep our members as safe as possible, and to continue monitoring statements from local and national health officials.
- Pre-recorded **online services** will continue as long as necessary.
- **Online Sunday Bible study** will continue for a time.
- **Online video and print devotions** will continue throughout the week.

Private Communion

- Members will be able to set an appointment for Communion by contacting our church office.
- If a pastor shows symptoms of illness or is in contact with others who are ill, he will no longer be eligible to distribute communion.
- The pastor will wash his hands thoroughly and wear a mask as he prepares the communion elements. The elements will be placed on clean, easily washable plates, on a small table or stand near where communicants are situated to receive the Sacrament. Common cup will not be offered, only individual cups. The pastor will stay at least six feet away from participants at all times. When the pastor says, "Take, eat," the communicant will take a wafer from the plate. When he says, "Take, drink," the communicant will take an individual cup from the plate. There will be a nearby receptacle for disposing of used cups.
- In most cases, communicants will be asked to enter and exit through the church door on Clay St., which will be propped open for them so they can enter without touching anything. From that doorway, they will make their way to the front of church to receive Communion there. Those communicants who can't navigate the narthex steps will be able to make special arrangements for where to enter and where to receive Communion when they make their appointment with the pastor.
- The pastor will be masked during distribution. His hands will be sanitized. There will only be enough wafers and individual cups on the plates for those receiving communion.
- When the communicant(s) have left, the pastor will clean and disinfect both trays and prepare for the next person or group's arrival. He will also clean any hard surfaces that were touched by communicants as they entered and exited.
- Since we are dealing with a pandemic, those members who are not able to come to church for safety reasons are encouraged to look to their Baptism and to God's Word each day for their spiritual food, and to wait patiently and eagerly for the time when they are able to gather together again with fellow believers at the Lord's Supper.

Starting June 14th

- In-person services will resume at church, at the regular times. People will be asked to **register** for which service they'd like to attend, either online or by contacting our office.
- Based on numbers of people desiring to attend, we may offer additional services as needed.
- People will be seated in marked pews, with one person/household per pew. We will avoid shaking hands before and after the service.
- **Public Communion** will be offered as a part of those services, with households/individuals coming forward in a line to receive communion one person at a time, and with the pastor maintaining six-foot distancing and hygienic safety.
- **Private Communion** will still be available by request, as in phase 1.
- A plan will be in place for **cleaning surfaces** between services.
- A plan will be in place for what to do **if more than the expected number** of people show up for a given service.
- **Spanish in-person services** may resume now or later, depending on input from those interested in attending.

Note that everything in this plan including the June 14th start date could change based on new government restrictions or new information regarding the virus and its local effects.