

Inside Worship

“Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”

(Philippians 2: 4)

As we prepare to worship inside both of our church buildings on Sunday, October 4, I wanted to take the opportunity to share with you our congregations' procedures for worship as we continue to work through the COVID-19 pandemic. It has not been an easy year for any of us, and we haven't had the opportunity to worship inside of our church buildings since March, so as we set ourselves to worship inside we will do so taking the verses above from Philippians to heart. Everything we do in terms of procedures and policies will be for the sake of those around us, in order to protect especially those who are most vulnerable to this virus. Based upon guidelines from the CDC, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and counsel from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we have produced these policies in order to make our worship environment as safe as we can to reduce the chance of spreading the virus if, when we gather, someone might be infected. What follows is our set of policies for the time being. These may change as rates of infection increase/decrease over the coming weeks or months.

1. Masks must be worn inside the church buildings at all times.
2. Physical distancing will be maintained in both buildings. Many of the following policies pertain to physical distancing.
3. Worshippers will be given, upon entering the church building, a bulletin which will contain all that is needed to participate in worship. Please keep and refer to this bulletin and its contents throughout the service. Also, you are asked to take the bulletin home with you upon the completion of worship.
4. As you receive the bulletin, you are asked to proceed directly to your seat in the sanctuary. Distancing will be set up in seating according to cushions on the pews. Family/household units are invited to be seated in a section of the pews where a seat cushion is in place. The cushions will be set up to create sufficient distance between worshipping households.
5. Hand sanitizer and masks will be available in an easily noticed place for those who need these supplies. Please feel free to make use of them at any time.
6. Certain parts of each building will be off-limits for general traffic, including the office, the rear nursery room, the kitchen and the meeting room downstairs at Ringtown and the Sunday School area, the narthex/entrance and kitchen at Brandonville except for restroom use and

necessary church business. The boiler room will not be unlocked for entrance at Ringtown. All worshippers are asked to use the main doors in both buildings for entrance and exit.

7. Offering will be received in a container in the rear of the center aisle in each sanctuary and not received pew to pew during the service.
8. Windows and doors will remain open as much as possible to promote the flow of fresh air into each sanctuary.
9. Members of church council will be available to hand out bulletins and guide worshippers in following these policies, particularly as they apply to seating in the sanctuary. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.
10. Those who assist in greeting and in worship duties will sanitize and wear gloves to perform duties such as handing our bulletins and assisting in communion.
11. In order to reduce the amount of aerosols in the air, we encourage worshippers to speak congregational responses in a regular conversational voice (not loudly). We will not be singing hymns in order to reduce our aerosol footprint in the air where we gather.
12. Worshippers are asked to exit the church building upon the completion of worship and not to cluster together for conversation and fellowship before or after worship. We understand this is difficult, as catching up with each other is an important part of our congregational life. Hopefully, soon we will be able to transition to allow more fellowship.
13. Please try to conduct as much office/congregational business as possible during the week or by phone. If you do need to conduct office business on a Sunday, please try to keep it as brief as possible.
14. Worship will be similar to what we've been doing during our outdoor services. Instructions will be given prior to communion for receiving the sacrament. Please follow these instructions to help the receiving of communion to flow as smoothly as possible.
15. We will continue to livestream and record worship for our Facebook page as we are able.

Please try to keep in mind that these measures are for the safety of everyone who gathers, especially those who are most vulnerable. We have developed these procedures out of genuine love for all of you who choose to worship with us in the coming weeks. Nothing about this year has been easy, but with everyone's cooperation we can begin the process of assembling once again to hear God's promises and receive the sacraments inside of our cherished sanctuaries. Because so much about this situation is fluid, please keep on the lookout for further updates or changes in these policies. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pastor Jay or the church office for clarification.