

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church – Protocol for regathering

As members of St. Andrew's look to resume in person gathering for worship on Sunday mornings, the Council has prepared the following guidelines and protocols. These have been drafted in compliance with the ELCA and NC Synod recommendations and in consultation with CDC and NCGov best practices. Please contact a Congregation Council member if you have questions or concerns.

When Governor Cooper lifts the stay-at-home order and allows gatherings of up to **fifty** people, St. Andrews will resume in person worship in the sanctuary. Phase II which began on May 22, limits to 10 the number people allowed at inside gatherings. While religious communities are, technically, exempt from this order, the NC Synod and St. Andrew's Council feel it is better to operate on the side of extreme caution and respect the guideline against gathering.

When we do resume in-person gatherings, only essential meetings (such as worship) will resume. High risk/vulnerable individuals and those who are ill are highly encouraged to remain at home until all restrictions are lifted. Worship services will continue to be broadcast indefinitely via FaceBook Live and the radio on Sundays.

Building preparations: The weekend before in person worship resumes (which will likely not be before mid-to-late June), there will be a church work day to refresh and sanitize the building. The property committee will prioritize cleaning needs, and family units will be invited to work together using appropriate spatial distancing. If necessary, a schedule will be created to allow for multiple work sessions. Following worship each week, the spaces used will be thoroughly cleaned, and the sanctuary doors will remain open following worship in order to allow fresh air to circulate into the space. Fans will be utilized to circulate air out of the sanctuary.

Hymnals, Bibles, pew pads, and pew cushions will be removed from pews in order to facilitate cleaning in between worship services. Pews will be roped off to allow for proper distancing. The nursery and all spaces except the sanctuary and bathrooms will be closed. The library will be utilized as a quiet space for families with children who need to step out of worship.

To minimize contact with frequently touched surfaces, only the front doors of the church will be utilized. These doors will be propped open allowing access into the sanctuary without the need to touch door handles. Individuals with mobility issues are encouraged to be dropped off at the front of the church for easy, single-level access into the sanctuary. Individuals who are capable of walking longer distances are encouraged to park in the remote lot to allow closer access to the building for those who are less comfortable walking.

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Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance and in various locations around the sanctuary. Signage will be utilized around the building to remind members of best practices for personal and communal safety.

Worship: Given the airborne nature of the virus, choirs and singing will be suspended during this phase. Music will still be an integral part of worship, and Dr. Luhrs will work with Pastor Lohr Sapp to provide appropriate musical selections and guest musicians. Those who continue to worship at home are encouraged to sing loudly, and hymnals can be made available for home use.

Bulletins will not be distributed by ushers but will be pre-set. Members are encouraged to take bulletins home with them for recycling or to download an electronic version on their phone or tablet prior to worship. Greeters will not be utilized during this phase.

Members are encouraged to wear masks when gathering and to refrain from physical contact. The passing of the peace will be conducted without physical contact, and there will be no "hand shake" line before or after worship. Offering plates will not be passed among the congregation but will be stationed at various locations around the sanctuary for individuals to deposit envelopes into.

Eucharist will not be celebrated during this phase. The Council will continue to consider best practices for the distribution of the elements when Eucharist resumes. This will likely involve filling individual cups from the pouring chalice and using tongs for the distribution of wafers.

After the benediction and during the closing hymn, the congregation will be encouraged to exit the sanctuary via the front doors following the crucifer and pastor. While extensive congregating will be discouraged, members would be welcome to visit on the church lawn while maintaining appropriate spatial distance and following other recommended guidelines (i.e. no physical contact, wearing masks, etc.).

Other gatherings: Sunday school, choir practice, and adult seminars will be suspended during this time. The nursery will be closed, and parents of infants are encouraged to use the library if a quiet space is required during worship. (Babies and children are always welcome during worship at St. Andrew's - even if they are fussy!)

Phase III - As Governor Cooper announces a move into Phase III of the state's reopening plan, the Council will revise these guidelines and reassess worship practices and gathering protocols based on the recommendations of public health officials and denominational statements.