

## St. Paul's Lutheran Church Dallas, NC

### Protocols for regathering in response to COVID-19

#### Summary:

Out of love for our neighbor St. Paul's Lutheran Church made the decision to postpone in-person gatherings to protect our members and staff from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we begin to think about regathering, the following are the guidelines have been recommended by the regathering taskforce and approved by the church council. The guidelines will be published in phases until it is safe for us all to fully gather together in our sanctuary again. The taskforce and Council carefully considered:

- The safety of the community and congregation.
- Recommendations from health officials.
- Recommendations from the NC Synod and the ELCA.
- Potential liability and insurance issues.
- Recommendations from the county, state and federal governments.

#### Phase 1

Tentative\* effective date: July 19, 2020

*\*The regathering task force and the church Council will closely monitor our local coronavirus trends and guidance from health officials. The start date may be postponed if trends in our area worsen.*

#### I. Worship options:

***Open air service:*** *On Wednesday nights at 7:00pm we will have a short service on the front lawn. Members need to bring their own seating and are encouraged to bring hand sanitizer and face masks. Maintaining a social distance is required. The church will have volunteers to ensure social distancing is maintained. No bathrooms will be available. We will monitor the weather and send a phone message should we need to cancel due to inclement weather. The phone message will be sent no later than 6:00pm. Attendance will be recorded for contact tracing purposes. If anyone has attended a service and becomes sick, please let Pastor know.*

***Sunday morning worship:*** *Sunday worship at 10:30am will continue to be virtual/live streamed only during phase 1. No more than 10 people will be allowed in the sanctuary. Please do not come into the church on Sunday mornings unless you are participating in the service.*

#### II. Special services:

***Funerals-*** *A graveside service only will be offered. Nothing indoors should be offered in phase 1 (ex: bathrooms, bereavement meals, etc.) The family will be given the opportunity to plan a full memorial service in the sanctuary when we reopen at full capacity if they wish to do so.*

***Weddings-*** *Weddings wishing to take place in our sanctuary should not have more than 10 people in attendance in phase 1. The service may be recorded to share with other friends, family and church members. Weddings may take place outdoors with prior approval from the Pastor.*

***Baptisms-** Baptisms may take place with prior approval from the Pastor. No more than 10 people should be in attendance for the baptism. The service may be recorded to share with other friends, family, and church members. An outdoor baptism may be planned during a Wednesday night service if it is requested.*

### **III. Education and other ministry events:**

- *No fellowship events designed to bring the entire congregation together should take place in phase 1.*
- *Small groups may meet outdoors as desired. Participants are encouraged to bring their own seating, hand sanitizer and face masks. Social distancing is required. Please call the church office to reserve your time slot.*
- *Bollinger Hall may be reserved by a member should they wish to schedule something indoors with 10 people or less.*
- *No food preparation should take place indoors.*
- *No Sunday School classes will be held on Sunday mornings in our building.*

### **IV. Why did we decide this?**

*At St. Paul's we have a church family that is worth protecting. All the medical guidance tells us that currently, the virus is not over. Cases in Gaston County are up 312% as of June 12, 2020. Our loved ones are at high risk of contracting the virus when we are indoors with others for more than 50 minutes. This makes our traditional church services one of the highest risk settings we could be in. In our church's mission statement, we proclaim "to reach out to serve each other and the needs of all God's people in this community and beyond". This is a historical moment in time when our world needs us to lead by the Christian example of loving our neighbors enough to put our personal thoughts and feelings about this pandemic aside. We have already suffered one great loss in our church family due to the virus. If we follow these guidelines, we hope to prevent putting another family in that heartbreaking situation. The St. Paul's regathering task force is currently researching and working on developing a plan for phase 2 of regathering.*

### **V. Sources**

- [https://www.gastongov.com/news\\_detail\\_T32\\_R373.php](https://www.gastongov.com/news_detail_T32_R373.php)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/>
- <https://nclutheran.org/>
- <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>

**Approved on: 6/28/2020**