

Guidelines for Indoor Worship
Approved by St. John's Church Council
October 12, 2020

The Safe Operating Task Force has met regularly since May to consider safety guidelines for all our operations during the pandemic. The group consists of the pastors, Vice President Ruth Dahl, Dr. Rod Christensen, Leah Garlie and Nathan Proctor. They have consulted on how we might gather indoors during the pandemic.

During the warmer months, we have tried to maximize opportunities for gathering outside, knowing that indoor gatherings pose a greater public health risk. As the weather turns, we are considering how to meet our community's needs for worship and fellowship that takes into account the many different circumstances our families face. We will continue to offer remote options for worship and fellowship throughout the winter, including a new livestream option for the worship broadcast.

Planning for indoor worship requires that we follow state guidelines and that we significantly change our habits in worship. We will be training ushers in how to guide worship guests, and in coming weeks we will offer a couple of indoor worship services with limited numbers. The results of these experiments will guide further decisions about worship this winter. The Council will be taking into account the numbers of those interested as well as the safety of staff and volunteers. We also know that the evolving situation in our state and county with the virus makes all our plans provisional.

Our plans are based on the current knowledge of how Covid-19 spreads, and how we can reduce those risks.

1. Covid-19 is spread both by people with symptoms and by people who have no symptoms.
 - People with symptoms must not enter St. John's, but everyone must take precautions as if they are contagious.
2. Covid-19 is spread by respiratory droplets. That risk can be significantly reduced by wearing masks that cover the nose and mouth, and staying at least 6 feet apart.
 - We will have limited capacity for indoor worship, consistent with state guidelines and requiring that all indoor services be by RSVP. We will prioritize the attendance of those directly involved in worship rites of the day (such as affirmation of baptism, remembrance of the saints, or music leadership).
 - We will wear masks 100% of the time in the building. The only exceptions, per state guidelines, are for children under 2, and for those leading the service, where we will maintain even greater distance.
 - We will sit in household units, and ushers will help us maintain proper distance, and dismiss us after the service so that exits are not crowded as we leave.

- Participants will need to arrive 10 minutes early so that everyone can be seated safely.
 - We will not share Holy Communion.
 - Ushers will be clearly identified and trained to enforce the guidelines.
3. Covid-19 can be spread from surfaces, but that is a smaller risk.
- We will disinfect door handles and frequently touched pew surfaces between services.
 - Hymnals have been removed and we use printed service folders.
4. Covid-19 can be spread by aerosol (tiny particles that float throughout an enclosed space.). This risk depends on the amount of time spent in the space and the amount of aerosol in the air. Singing is especially likely to create aerosols. Being outside is much safer. The degree of risk from aerosol is still debated by experts.
- Our air filtration system has been upgraded, but it is not possible to eliminate or quantify the risk.
 - The congregation will not sing during services at this time. Cantors/soloists will wear masks.
 - We will not linger inside before or after services, or have refreshments or fellowship activities at this time.
 - We will not have back-to-back services, but will allow time between building uses.
5. Covid-19 is much more dangerous for older people and those with chronic health conditions, but it is not free of risk for anyone. The risk of severe illness varies, but young and healthy people can catch and transmit the virus at the same rate.
- We will use the same protocols for all people, understanding that our actions impact the larger community beyond our congregation.