



Shepherd
OF THE PRAIRIE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is with great joy that we welcome you back to public worship at Shepherd of the Prairie on Sunday, September 6. For the months of September and October we will continue our every other week Saturday parking lot worship. Those dates being Saturday, September 12 and 26 and October 10 and 24.

This has been a long time coming and we are so thankful that we can now reenter the building and around the altar of God to receive the gifts of God's grace. I also want to publicly thank all those who have helped to create an online presence for our church related to worship. God has richly blessed us with wonderfully gifted people and want to assure you that we will continue to enhance what we do with our online ministry going forward.

With these thoughts in mind I want to share with you some things to be mindful of should you choose to resume worshipping with us publicly at this time.

Of course, if you or anyone in your household are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 (shortness of breath, fever, cough, new loss of taste or smell) you must not attend. Also, people with compromised health issues/pre-existing conditions which may put you at higher risk. We will continue to live-stream the Sunday morning worship services (Saturday evening will not be live streamed).

We have been carefully preparing new procedures with the guidance of the ELCA, the Northern IL Synod, and the state to ensure the safety of all of our parishioners. With that being said, there is always some risk involved when attending public functions. You will notice some changes as you return to SOTP, and we ask you respectfully follow those changes while here. Below are the new procedures and protocols you will see.

Please read them completely and carefully. (You will also find a copy of these procedures on our church website.)

During our initial opening we will be able to accommodate 70 people per service. Initially, we will begin small to be sure we are caring faithfully and well for all who are with us. This will also give us some room in case we have first time worshipers or guests.

Please go on to our web site, www.sotp.org, or www.bit.ly/RSVPSOTP to sign up to register to attend one of our worship services on Sundays. You may also call the office no later than Thursday of each week.

Entry, Arrival and Seating for Worship

- Worshippers attending the 9:00 am service enter through the East doors of the new building. Worshippers at 10:45 am service enter through the South side doors of the new building. All other doors will remain locked.
- Please arrive no earlier than 20 minutes prior to the start of worship, and put on your face mask as you exit your vehicle. You will keep your mask on the entire time until you return to your vehicle, with the exception of receiving Holy Communion.
- You will be welcomed by a greeter.
- Please maintain six-foot social distancing at all times with people not from your own household, and use the provided hand sanitizer before entering the sanctuary.
- When it is time to enter the sanctuary, an usher will show you to your seat. We will begin seating from the front of the church moving to the back. (it is a very unLutheran thing but know you probably will not be seated in your “normal” pew. Thank you for your understanding.
- Please do not congregate in the Sanctuary prior to worship. We encourage you to use the time for personal prayer and meditation.
- Every other pew will be closed, and the available pews will have markers every six feet to assist you. Household members, of course, do not have to observe that distancing with one another in the pew.

Temporary Changes for Weekend Worship

- The “sign of peace” will be limited to non-contact gestures.
- We will not pass collection baskets. They will be located at the doors as you exit the building.
- Singing will be limited in order to minimize the spread of germs. As song leaders sing you are invited to mouth the words quietly or speak the words in your heart.
- Holy Communion will be distributed using gluten free wafers. Initially we will receive using only one element. The usher will At the end of service please wait for an usher to dismiss you.
- Please do not congregate in the sanctuary or welcome center dismiss you from the pew for communion. Please maintain proper social distancing in the Communion line with people outside of your household.
- For now we can only give Communion by you extending your hand open into which the wafer of bread will be placed. We ask you to consume the wafer after you return to the pew.
- Also note that we ask you not wear any gloves when you receive Communion.
- Please do not congregate in the sanctuary or welcome center following worship. Our cleaning team needs to be able to as quickly as possible be sure all areas of use are sanitized. If you do wish to speak to others please do so outside on the parking lot and continue social distancing.

- All hymnals, Bibles and attendance pads have been temporarily removed due to the virus remaining on surfaces for a period of time after being touched.
- Pastor Mark will do his best to be out on the parking lot before and after worship.
- Please exit from the same door you entered.

Sanitation and Safety Precautions

- Only the restrooms in the new building will be opened. Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by a parent to make sure they properly wash their hands.
- Please do not bring any sanitizing supplies or wipes with you that contain bleach, as they will damage the wood of the pews and other items.
- Parents, please note – We will not be able to open the nursery. All children should remain with their families while in the building. We will be blessed by their voices in the worship.

We know these changes will take some time to get used to, and will require adjustments and flexibility from all of us. And we understand that some people may prefer to continue worshipping at home due to the new procedures and protocols, and that is okay too. I hope you know that we are being very conscious of your safety in the midst of this pandemic. Our hope is that many of these changes will no longer be necessary when we move into the State's fifth and final phase for reopening.

In the meantime, we deeply appreciate your patience and cooperation as we all try to do our part to keep everyone safe and healthy in worship at SOTP. We can't wait to see you and celebrate with you in person!

Please be assured of our continued prayers for you and your loved ones. Let us all continue to redouble our efforts in prayer for this pandemic coming to a speedy end and that we all continue to remain safe!

Peace,

Pastor Mark