

COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan for St. Michael's Lutheran Church

Approved by the Parish Council

Date: _____

Preamble

My Command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command (John 15:12-14). This document outlines St. Michael's plans to love each other through our actions. We will love our neighbors by doing all we can to protect their health emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Covid-19 Plan

St Michael's is committed to providing a safe and healthy facility for our staff, members, and visitors. This plan was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure we implement strategies and procedures to protect our member and to preserve public health. The entire church will have a role in implementing this plan to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 within our facility and our community that would result in a disruption to our mission. Therefore, all persons in our facility will be expected to comply with all aspects of this plan. The church leadership and council have full support in enforcing the provisions of this policy.

This plan has been developed by with church staff and members by reviewing Local, State, Federal recommendations for:

- Hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting;
- Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;
- Controls for social distancing;
- Housekeeping, including cleaning, disinfection and decontamination;
- Communications and training that will be provided to persons on-site; and
- Management and supervision necessary to ensure effective implementation of the plan.

This preparedness and response plan assumes the following:

1. St. Michael's will resume activities in a phased approach.
2. St Michael's will do its best to follow the guidance from Federal, State and Local authorities. We will also take into account guidance from our Minnesota South District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS).
3. The COVID19 situation will evolve and we will remain adaptable to the dynamic environment.
4. Those staff functions that can practically stay at home to complete work may do so until St Michael's is fully opened to minimize large gatherings.
5. Social distancing, wearing of masks or other appropriate PPE, hand-washing, and disinfection of surfaces are key factors to reducing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus thus we encourage the wearing of masks and frequent washing of hands.
6. Personal responsibility is key to safe operations and the avoidance of disease transmission. Links to educational materials are available at the end of this report.
7. Facility assessments to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies should be done periodically as part of sound occupational health and public health practice. This plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure effectiveness.

Returning to Public Worship and in Church Gatherings

Consider the Needs of Others – if you are not well please stay home

Before attending any event at the church please ask the following health questions of yourself. Have you had any of the following symptoms since your last day at work or the last time you were here that you cannot attribute to another health condition? Please answer "Yes" or "No" to each question.

Do you have:

- Fever (100.4°F or higher), or feeling feverish?
- Chills?
- A new cough?
- Shortness of breath?
- A new sore throat?
- New muscle aches?
- New headache?
- New loss of smell or taste?

If you answer yes to any of the above or have been exposed to someone with the Coronavirus or have been diagnosed with Coronavirus you must stay home.

If a person attends a service or meeting at the church and discovers that they have Covid-19 they should contact one of the pastors: Pastor Pat at (952) 451-0940 or email PastorPat@smlcb.org or Pastor Ryan at (952-969-7582 or email PastorRyan@smlcb.org. An email will be sent to the congregation with the date of the exposure and the section that the person was seated.

If someone is showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

Call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

Social Distancing – Please keep 6 feet apart

Maintaining appropriate social distance is an important part of preventing the spread of Covid-19. To assist in this effort we are implementing the following measures.

Building traffic flow for worship services

- Worship services will continue on-line and in the parking lot. We are also adding in-person worship.
- INITIALLY MASKS WILL BE REQUIRED DURING INDOOR WORSHIP. Masks are available from the church for those who do not have a mask.
- As we develop routine we will offer mask optional services.
- We will limit the worship size to a maximum of 250 for masked services and to 125 for mask optional services. We will start with smaller numbers and increase to the maximum numbers as we develop traffic flow systems.
- All people will be asked to sign-up for worship services to assist in management of seating. Sign-up links will be a weekly part of our Newsletter. We will make every attempt to find seating for all who arrive at our worship service even if they were unable to sign-up.
- Members who are in the at-risk categories are encouraged to stay home or attend outdoor worship.
- All doors from the outside into the lobby and again from the lobby to the worship center will be propped open.
- Two lines will be formed with designated marks indicating 6 foot increments. These lines will lead directly to the worship center.
- One of the lines will lead to the right set of double doors and the other to the left set of double doors. If you enter the left you will be seated on the left side of the church. If you enter the right you will be seated on the right side of the church.

- Ushers will direct you to your seat. You will be seated by the ushers in order to maximize the seating capacity of the church.
- Once you take a seat that is where you need to remain during the service.
- Offering plates will not be passed during the service. Offering plates or boxes will be in the back of the worship center.
- We will no longer have the greeting at the beginning of the service.
- There will be no pew Bibles or any other material in the pew racks. Please bring your own.
- You will be asked to sign in via texting as a replacement to welcome cards. This sign in, which includes your section and row number, which will be located at the end of the pew, will assist in meeting the required notification of any person who could have been exposed to a person with Covid-19. If you are unable to text please email Office@smlcb.org or call the main office number and leave your name and seat row at 952-831-5276.
- Dismissal – rows will be dismissed from both sides to minimize cross contamination.
- There is no fellowship time in the building.
- It is recommended not to use bathrooms if at all possible.
 - In the event you need a restroom we will have signs reminding people to wash their hands for 20 seconds (say The Lord’s Prayer) and we will move the garbage bins outside of the bathroom so that they can use their paper towel to open the door.
 - No more than two people in the bathroom at one time.
- We ask that ushers arrive 30 minutes before the start of the service and members start arriving 20 minutes before the service to keep congestion to a minimum.
- The elevator at St. Michael’s will not be used during times of worship.
- Drinking fountains have been covered.
- Signage will be posted to remind us to:
 - Wash hands
 - Cover your cough
 - Maintain social distance

Ushers will receive training on how to direct traffic flow in the lobby and worship area.

Other Meetings at the Church

We will continue to monitor the state regulations. Currently meetings are to be limited to 10 people in person. We will use our judgment based on group needs. Currently we are limiting the use of rooms to a maximum of 25% capacity. We are strongly encouraging masks in all gatherings.

Each group will be asked to sanitize the space they are using before and after usage. We will maintain a minimum of 3 hours between groups using the same space.

About our facilities

The air handlers in the worship service create negative air pressure. This means that air will not blow across you from a neighboring worshipper. The air is pulled up toward the ceiling. The air is filtered twice before recirculating. St Michael's has outsourced the maintenance of our HVAC system to maximize their effectiveness.

Hand sanitizing stations are available in the lobby.

Staff health

If a staff member is diagnosed with Coronavirus the staff, and all church members affected, will be notified by the staff via telephone or email based on the exposure.

If you have been exposed to a person with symptoms of Covid-19 you must stay home for 14 days or until the person has received a negative test for Covid-19. If you have been sick with Covid-19 symptoms or have been diagnosed with Covid-19 you must stay home for a minimum of 10 days and any fever must have been gone for at least 3 days.

Sick leave will be paid for employees of St. Michael's for any absence caused by COVID-19.

All employees and members who are in the at-risk categories are strongly urged to stay home during this time.

Remote Work and Adjusted Onsite Hours

St Michael's has implemented the following procedures and practices for remote work and adjusted hours.

- Telework is approved for all persons who can accomplish their primary duty functions from home.
- Staff are provided guidance and training to work remotely.
- When possible equipment is available for staff members to complete their assigned responsibilities and tasks.
- Flexible hours and staggered shifts are available to minimize the number of persons in the facility at one time.

Onsite Work

- Social distance will be kept.
- Staff are strongly encouraged to sanitize any equipment used in shared office space (copier, microwave, etc.) after each usage

Housekeeping

- All cleaning products meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.
- If there is a confirmed positive case reported the custodial staff will coordinate cleaning and disinfecting of that individual's work space.
- Public spaces such as building lobbies, restrooms, door handles, handrails, and elevator buttons will be frequently disinfected on days on which there is public worship.

Health Screening

The staff is expected to regularly review their own health as required on page 1.

St Michael's has leave policies that encourage staff to stay at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when they are required by a healthcare provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household. We will continue to protect employees through the Family Medical Leave Act and the Family First Coronavirus Response Act Emergency Paid Sick Leave (Federal)

Questions on leave policies should be directed to Tom Solberg.

Covid -19 symptoms or diagnosis

If an employee is exposed to a person with Covid-19 or has symptoms of Covid-19 they are to remain away from the workplace for 14 days or until it has been confirmed that they are negative through a Covid-19 test.

If a COVID-19 case is confirmed in a staff member or in a member of their household, the staff member will be asked to remain at home and considered to be in quarantine for no less than 14 days. A facility assessment will begin to determine what additional public health and cleaning measures should be implemented.

Consistent with compliance with the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), staff members health status and health information will be protected.

Outside Groups

St Michael's serves as a gathering place for congregation and community members. Gathering purposes in the congregation include: congregational work, support to missions, celebration events, community meeting, and social engagements. Use of the facility will be based on the phases of this plan and make efforts to align with state guidance and policies. Priority will be given to mission related activities.

Any group that would like to use the facility while this plan is operational must request use using the Request for Facility Use form (Appendix A). Each request will be reviewed Tom Solberg and Mike McClellan of the church staff.

If approved, each group utilizing the facility will be required to:

- Review this document.
- Share facility rules with participants
 - Conduct appropriate social distancing
 - Strongly encourage the wearing of masks
 - Wash hands
 - Cover your cough
- Take attendance to include name and contact information

No member of the congregation or community may use the facility until they have received approval from the church staff.

Resources

Appendix B provides a list of resources to educate you regarding decisions and activities during the COVID19 pandemic.

St Michael's Phases

The purpose of this phase approach is to provide guidance and direction for activities at the church. The disease progression is imperfectly known and there may be times where we may need to move back and forth between phases.

External Conditions	Church Activities
Phase 1: Stay at Home	
<p>External Conditions: Government Orders for communities to stay at home. Disease spread is occurring the in the community and hospitalization are increasing. Testing is limited and there are widespread PPE shortages.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): Government issues to stay at home orders.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship services move to online delivery. ● Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. ● Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptism) are postponed and all participants notified. <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All staff will telework ● Staff may return to the facility to acquire equipment and record worship segments. ● Bible studies and small groups will meet online.
Phase 2: Sunrise CURRENT PHASE	

<p>External Conditions: There are declining case counts and availability of testing is increasing. Contact tracing is in place and PPE is available for social distancing purposes (e.g. cloth masks).</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.</p> <p>Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to the facility.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worship is held online. ● Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. ● Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptisms) should be kept to less than 30 in attendance and be able to maintain social distancing. Approval is required. <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bible studies and small groups continue to meet online. ● Office functions are limited to ensure essential operations. ● Church councils and leadership teams of less than 10 might consider meeting in person. Wearing masks will be encouraged as well as maintaining social distancing measures. ● Facility users/renters may be allowed with approval and based on size and mission. Social distancing and public health measures will be enforced.
<p>Phase 3: Sunrise Plus COMING STAGE</p>	

External Conditions:

Government leaders continue relaxation of social distancing measures. Cases of COVID19 continue to decrease and testing is available. PPE is widely available.

Criteria (for phase):

State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.

Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to campus

Church has the ability to gradually expand number of people in the church while maintaining social distancing

Church Activities

Worship

- Worship is held online and in-person with social distancing measures implemented per local guidance. Multiple services may be considered to spread out participation.
- Entrance and exit into the church will be designed to avoid gathering.
- Communion may be offered in alignment with public health in mind.
- No-touch alternatives for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Consider removing prayer books and Bibles if you will have multiple services. No bulletins will be handed out.
- No fellowship/social hour will be scheduled during this phase. People are encouraged to leave the building after the service (no mingling).

Activities on-site

- Bible studies and small groups meet in person while maintaining some online options for high risk individuals and those who do not feel comfortable being in public. Approval is required.
- Office functions resume as normal, with attention to cleaning.
- Groups, teams, and committees could meet in person. Approval is required.

High risk individuals are encouraged to stay at home.

Social distancing and public health practices (e.g. wearing masks) will be encouraged while at church and in community ministry, as is recommended in public spaces.

Phase 4: Normal Operations

<p>External Conditions: There are no or minimal state restrictions. A vaccine may be available. Widespread testing and identification of new COVID-19 cases, with quarantining is occurring.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): No or minimal state restrictions.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Business as usual.</p>
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Appendix A – Request for Facility Use (place church form here. Add statement to it that you must review our policy

Request for [Church name] Use

[Church name] priority continues to be the health and safety of all members of our community. However, we also recognize that our facility supports the missions of our congregation and our community. Consistent with [name state] orders and public health advice, this form will enable church leadership to identify who might be permitted back to use the facility, starting first with groups who support essential church and social justice missions for our congregation and community.

For everyone’s safety, the church’s intent is to slowly and gradually invite groups back. Decisions for facility use will be based on phases of the [Church name] preparedness and response plan. To facilitate approval for use of our [Church name], please complete the following form.

Name:

Group Size:

Will this gathering be repeated (e.g. weekly)? If yes, describe frequency.

Date for gathering(s):

Provide a brief summary of the gathering and why it must be done on-site or at another location away from your home.

[Church name] will provide guidance for use of the facility. Describe the precautions you will take to ensure your health and safety and the health and safety of those who will participate in the gathering. (methods and means for social distancing, PPE, etc.)

Appendix B - Guidance for developing a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

General

CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

Businesses

CDC Resources for businesses and employers – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html

CDC General business frequently asked questions – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Federal OSHA – www.osha.gov

Handwashing

www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html

www.cdc.gov/handwashing

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html

www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

Social distancing

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

Housekeeping

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html

www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

Employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html

Training

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html

www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf