

## University Lutheran Church of Hope Health and Safety Policy May 26, 2020

*“What else is the epidemic but a fire which instead of consuming wood and straw devours life and body? You ought to think this way: ‘...the enemy has sent us poison and toxins. Therefore, I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, God will surely find me. In the meantime, I have done what the Lord expects of me and so I am not culpable for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely, as stated above. See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.’”*

-Martin Luther (translation by Rev. Bill Russell), in “Whether One Should Flee from the Plague” (1527), Luther’s Works, vol. 43

*“We entered the time of pandemic saying that our desire to love the neighbor would guide us; that we would respect the best thinking of our elected and healthcare officials. This understanding and commitment has not changed.”*

-Bp Ann Svennungsen, Minneapolis Area Synod, in a Message About In-Person Worship, May 21, 2020

*“As a community of faith we aspire to these goals:*

- *Cultivate deep roots in our neighborhood and the University community, by actively making our walls porous....*
- *Embrace all persons throughout their life journey in a community of love, respect, and acceptance....*
- *Fuel authentic worship and deepen spirituality....”*

-University Lutheran Church of Hope, A Vision for the Coming Years, Fall 2018

*“The question here is not whether our faith and faith communities are ‘essential’ to our lives as people of faith; we know they are! The question is whether [opening] our church building doors is ‘essential’ to practicing our faith and advancing the recovery of our communities. We know our churches provide life-giving, Spirit-nurturing meaning to our members and communities as well as often important services. Consider whether or not resuming in-person activities is necessary [while infection rates are still high] to the fulfillment of your mission and purpose. Can you still fulfill your mission and purpose while worshiping, meeting, and planning virtually? What, if any, in-person activities are ‘essential’ to the operation of your church life that you would feel confident about resuming given all known factors?”*

-Rev. Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ (an ecumenical partner with the ELCA), May 20, 2020

**Policy:** University Lutheran Church of Hope (ULCH) abides by state and local guidelines, ordinances, and directives related to the health and safety of all who use our building and grounds.

**Purpose:** This policy with the following procedures provides direction for those making decisions regarding health and safety practices. It reflects best practices based on science, community needs, and ULCH’s principle of equity that underpins the ministry of this congregation.

**Procedural Plans:** These procedures reflect where we are now. They will be evaluated, updated, and communicated on a regular basis as our situation changes. They have been prepared in dialogue with the Vision and Governance Board and the staff, and are based on guidance from a variety of sources (some included at the end).

## A COVID-19 PROCEDURE PLAN (as of May 26, 2020)

### COVID-19 Pandemic Phase 1:

**Overview:** Though there is a push to “re-open” our state, we know that the peak is yet to come. Much caution is vital for the health and well-being of the whole. This policy offers guidance into “how” we can meet in-person. It offers some of the questions and concerns that should be addressed.

- BUT, in the spirit of keeping one another and our communities safe and healthy, **we strongly encourage meeting online.**
- Our worship life will continue to be online for the foreseeable future.
- The staff and leaders are ready to support you with creative tools to assist.
- If there is a compelling reason to meet at church, opt for outdoors whenever possible.
- Wear masks always in indoor public spaces. Wear masks usually in outdoor spaces (unless gardening alone).
- Honor the 6 foot social distancing guidelines.
- Always sign in so if contact tracing becomes necessary it can be done.
- Wash hands regularly.
- Always schedule so we can be stewards of the space, clean thoroughly, and be hospitable.

### Entering the building

- a. **If you believe you are sick** (COVID-19 related or not), please do not come in.
- b. **We strongly encourage those in high-risk categories**, given age or underlying conditions, not to come inside the church building (even if they are otherwise healthy and fit). Those wishing to come to church should also consider who is in their household, and whether they fall into a high-risk category. Any risk of exposure that one person takes on is a risk that the whole household is also taking on.
- c. **Based on the City of Minneapolis Emergency Regulation 2020-12\***, we require that **everyone wear masks\*** while in the public spaces of the ULCH building. Please bring your own mask if you can. We will also have a supply of disposable masks on hand.
  - i. Note: The purpose of the mask is to contain large particles that the wearer might disperse to others. The mask does not prevent COVID-19, but may be a means of attempting to contain one’s own contaminants (cough, sneeze, etc) from others.
  - ii. Staff working alone in offices do not need to wear masks.
  - iii. We also ask that you wear masks when meeting outdoors. An exception to this is those who garden alone.
- d. **At the main entrance(s) of ULCH** we will provide COVID-19 information and signage, this ULCH Health and Safety Policy, masks, and hand sanitizer.
- e. **Everyone who comes into the building will sign in and sign out** at the main door (bring your own pen or sanitize shared pens/pencils between uses). The sign-in information will be provided to the Minnesota Department of Health for “contact tracing” in the event that someone would become infected with COVID-19. Engaging in this practice is a crucial way we will keep the congregation/community safe and cooperate with public health efforts in the wider community.

*\* Effective May 26, 2020 any individual who is over age two and able to medically tolerate a face covering shall be required to cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face covering in accordance with CDC guidance when in indoor spaces of public accommodation.*

## 2. Cleaning

- a. Our primary cleaning is contracted through ABM and includes **protocols** for COVID-19 sanitation.
- b. **We ask that users wipe down** the arms of chairs, surfaces, and door handles at the end of their time.

## 3. Church Life and Building Use

- a. **For the health and safety of all, we strongly encourage small groups and meetings to gather online (Zoom, etc, and tech support is available).**
- b. **Group gatherings of 10 people or less may be considered on site. Things to consider:**
  - i. As leaders and groups, **thoughtfully discern when it is compelling to meet at church** and when meeting online will work well. Meeting at church, one may unknowingly expose many to increased risk of COVID-19.
  - ii. **Gathering in person will pressure some to take risks** that are not in the best interest of their health, or their household's health.
  - iii. **If meeting in person**, consider ways for those uncomfortable with physically gathering to still participate. Talk with the Church Administrator if computer access is needed.
  - iv. **When possible, meet outside (patio, courtyard, etc.).**
    1. Place chairs 6 feet apart (and do not switch chairs)
    2. Bring your own chair, when possible.
    3. Wipe down chairs and surfaces after use.
    4. Bring your own coffee/water.
    5. Wearing masks is required.
    6. When meeting outdoors, try to plan ahead to avoid using the restrooms, but if necessary you may use the restroom by the lounge.
  - v. **Limit the need for indoor gatherings when possible. If meeting indoors:**
    1. Wear masks.
    2. Wipe down chair arms, surfaces and door handles after use.
    3. Observe a 6 foot distance between people and notice the taped indicators on chairs and tables.
    4. New occupancy numbers for available rooms are Library \_\_\_\_, Chapel \_\_\_\_, Lounge \_\_\_\_, Youth Room \_\_\_\_, Heritage Hall \_\_\_\_.
    5. **These areas are closed to use:** the upper hall of the education wing (and upper restrooms), main kitchen, lounge kitchenette, and nursery. The fellowship hall, the restrooms near the main kitchen, and the sanctuary are closed to use unless by special agreement.
- c. **Those meeting at church (inside or outside), should schedule** through the Church Administrator ([ulch@ulch.org](mailto:ulch@ulch.org)) and will need to stagger start times to lessen the number of people passing each other in halls and doors. **For indoor meetings, talk first to Pastor Jen** ([jenn@ulch.org](mailto:jenn@ulch.org)) and then schedule through Nathan ([ulch@ulch.org](mailto:ulch@ulch.org))
- d. **This health and safety policy includes building users, community users, and other renters.** Like for our congregational groups, we strongly encourage other users to meet online. If a group is less than 10 people and finds it compelling to meet in-person, we are only able to

offer space outdoors when staff is onsite (weekdays, evenings), and when the space isn't already reserved by other groups. **Non-church users are not able to meet inside at this time.** See the above policy for details of outside use.

#### 4. **Worship Life**

- a. **Sunday Mornings.** Though the governor has allowed for in-person worship at 25% capacity if desired, at ULCH online worship will continue for quite awhile. We know our community includes many who have risk factors. We have a mutual commitment to the health and well being of one another.
  - i. Even when we do worship in-person, we will consider how to make live-streaming available.
  - ii. We will consider how varied music is included and avoid singing and humming.
  - iii. We will consider alternate ways for sharing the peace and Holy Communion.
- b. **Evening Services and other small services.** For the time being we will continue to hold our twice monthly evening service online. In the future we can discern when and how these are held in-person. Other times of prayer are possible in the courtyard or patio and social distancing should be observed and masks required.
- c. **Funerals.** Small in-person graveside services are possible at this time. Larger in-person funerals and memorial services will need to wait.
  - i. The pastors and worship leaders are open to online services, live streaming, and other ways to make space for grief and support.
- d. **Weddings.** Small in-person weddings may be possible, particularly when outdoors.

#### 5. **Staff**

- a. Staff will continue to work primarily from home.
- b. Staff will determine a schedule to limit how many are at church at once.
- c. Interactions (pastoral care, planning, conversations) are encouraged by telephone, Zoom, etc. when possible.
- d. If meeting in-person, consider walks, sitting outside (at a distance), window visits, wearing masks, and other less risky options.
- e. The pastoral staff will visit at hospitals when allowed and feasible, and will visit those who are dying whenever possible. Do not hesitate to contact the pastors as needs arise.

#### 6. **Food and Drink**

- a. No coffee or food service will be available inside or outside the building.
- b. Please refrain from using either of the church kitchens (lower level main kitchen or lounge kitchenette).

#### 7. **When someone becomes infected.**

- a. If someone who has been in the church building becomes ill with COVID-19, they should notify the Lead Pastor or Church Administrator.
- b. Church staff would contact the Minnesota Health Department to follow their guidance. The sign in sheet from our entrance would be shared with the Minnesota Department of Health if requested.

- c. Individuals who learn of a possible exposure should always contact their health care practitioner immediately and follow their guidance in regard to self-isolating, testing, and other steps.
- d. In the situation of someone with a COVID-19 illness having been around the church building, the church will be in contact with local public health authorities and follow their guidance regarding church building use and activities.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Phase 2:**

1. When we get to Phase 2 and greater numbers of people are in the building, we will need to consider things such as:
  - a. Designating direction of traffic in hallways – one direction per hallway.
  - b. Clearly marking exterior and interior doorways as exit only or entrance only
  - c. Limiting the number of people in a multi-stall restroom to only one person at a time, with a waiting line (6 feet apart) outside the door.
  - e. Creating signage for restrooms and other doors.
  - f. Assessing cleaning needs and the MDH recommendations.
  - g. The nursery and childcare options.

### **Resources**

City of Minneapolis - Coronavirus updates

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/index.htm>

Minnesota Department of Health website pages related to COVID-19:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html>

Spanish language information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>

Varied resources collected and communicated by the Minneapolis Area Synod:

<http://mpls-synod.org/covid-19-resources/>

ELCA statement about returning to in-person worship (May 12, 2020):

<http://mpls-synod.org/files/Returning-to-In-person-Worship.pdf>

A presentation by Dr. Michael Osterholm to pastors:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/6Z0uccr-\\_z43TtDG4QSDA\\_EqW466f6is2yVL-vALmky9U3BQO1DwY7pDYetnC86r\\_1FTMzLcRO-xQs63?continueMode=true](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/6Z0uccr-_z43TtDG4QSDA_EqW466f6is2yVL-vALmky9U3BQO1DwY7pDYetnC86r_1FTMzLcRO-xQs63?continueMode=true)

Guidelines developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association:

[https://www.uua.org/safe/pandemics/gathering-guidance?fbclid=IwAR2e24GV9OWIHSRIAn3HA1tmT\\_I\\_XqngLcHgnbM5NqoJpoth4Zw3PZCtDclQ](https://www.uua.org/safe/pandemics/gathering-guidance?fbclid=IwAR2e24GV9OWIHSRIAn3HA1tmT_I_XqngLcHgnbM5NqoJpoth4Zw3PZCtDclQ)

A visual way of understanding the spread of the virus:

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/health/2020/05/20/science-experiment-tracks-spread-of-covid-19-pkg-ac360-kaye-vpx.cnn>

A thoughtful piece by the UCC Conference Minister, Rev. Shari Prestimon, framed with considerations:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/73d71b6a001/a13cba0f-5326-4151-944a-fcdc0869c5ef.pdf>