

University Lutheran Church of Hope COVID 19 Preparedness Plan August 25, 2020

Earlier versions of this document are available in the church office.

“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

“This outbreak is exposing the deep structural inequities that make communities pushed to the margins more vulnerable to health crises in good times and in bad...These structural inequities in our health care system do not ignore racial and gender disparities — and neither should our response to this pandemic.”

-Dorianne Mason, Director of Health Equity, National Women’s Law Center, as quoted in the Washington Post, April 7, 2020

“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 prevention of COVID-19 for 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 in compliance with the Minnesota Department of Health in the prevention of COVID-19.

Procedural Plans: Procedures reflect best practices based on science, community needs, and ULCH's principle of equity that underpins the ministry of this congregation. Procedures will be evaluated, updated, and communicated on a regular basis to employees, congregants, building users and renters. These procedures and plans have been developed in dialogue with the Vision and Governance Board and the staff, and are based on CDC and MDH guidelines (referenced at the end of this document).

Primary Contact: Pastor Jen Nagel, Lead Pastor, jenn@ulch.org, 612-331-5988

Secondary Contact: Nathan Obrestad, Church Administrator, nathano@ulch.org, 612-331-5988

GENERAL PROCEDURES

This plan has been developed to minimize the risk of infection related to COVID-19 for all in our community. COVID-19 is an evolving pandemic with no cure or vaccination available at this time. Therefore, the principle of prevention and risk minimization guides this plan. This plan provides procedures that reflect how we live in community with COVID-19

Link here to the Minnesota Department of Health guidance for faith-based communities:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/communities.html#comm>

- **In the spirit of decreasing our collective risk of infection, we encourage meeting online.**
 - **Our worship life** will continue to be online for the foreseeable future.
 - We recognize that some communities and demographics are affected disproportionately by the effects of COVID-19. In creating this procedure we seek to **contribute to racial equity**.
 - **The staff and leaders are ready to support you** with creative tools (i.e. Zoom, Facetime, etc) for meeting, fellowship, worship, support and individual conversation and pastoral care.
 - **If there is a compelling reason to meet at church**, please contact Pastor Jen Nagel (lead pastor) or Nathan Obrestad (church administrator) for additional information.
 - **While the weather is mild, opt for gathering outdoors** whenever possible.
- **Prevention Strategies.**
 - **If you believe you are sick** (COVID-19 related or not), please do not attend events at ULCH or offsite at other venues. Contact a healthcare provider for consultation.

- **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 the church building or other venues 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.
- **Wearing Masks**
 - **Masks are to be worn** by all, except children under two years old and those with health concerns.
 - Wear masks at all times in indoor spaces. (MN Executive Order 20-81). Staff working alone in private office spaces do not need to wear masks.
 - **Wear masks in outdoor spaces if 6 foot physical distancing** is not possible. (MN Executive Order 20-81)
 - Bring your own mask if you are able. A supply of disposable masks are available.
 - **Note:** The purpose of the mask is to contain 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.
- **Accessing the Building**
 - **At the designated main entrance (north door) of ULCH**, COVID-19 information, signage, the ULCH COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, masks, hand sanitizer, and supplies for wiping surfaces will be available.
 - **A COVID-19 Symptom checklist** will be posted at the entrance to the building as a reminder to staff, congregants, guests, renters, service providers and others that signing in and entry to the building acknowledges the lack of any of the symptoms on the checklist.
 - **Sign in and sign out** at the designated main entrance if you need to enter the building. If requested by the Minnesota Department of Health, this would be provided for contact tracing. Engaging in this practice is how we cooperate with public health in efforts to mitigate COVID-19.
 - **Honor the 6 foot physical distancing** at all times.
 - **Wash hands** regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer (60% alcohol). Reminder signs are posted throughout the building.
 - **Signage will indicate movement in the building.**
 - Designating direction of traffic in hallways – one direction per hallway, where needed.
 - Reminder signage will be posted in usage areas regarding maintaining 6 foot distance.
 - At entrance/exit doorways where space is limited, please follow directional signs.
- **Scheduling**
 - At this time **it's especially important that the church is aware of all associated events, both those gathering offsite and those meeting at church.** (An example

- of some groups that have been meeting offsite are small groups, book group, small backyard services, and recreational events.)
- Schedule all events through the church administrator. If your group has not been meeting onsite, also check in with Pastor Jen in advance of scheduling so procedures can be discussed.
- We strive to be stewards of the space, clean thoroughly, be hospitable and follow prevention practices. Scheduling makes this possible.
- **When gathering offsite, this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan must still be followed.**
 - **This means a little additional organization is needed on the front end**--in this time of COVID-19, think of it as part of deep and mutual hospitality.
 - **Prior to the event, remind participants to review the COVID-19 symptom checklist**, and refrain from attending if they are experiencing any of these symptoms: fever, chills, a new cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, new muscle aches, new headaches, new loss of smell or taste.
 - **Provide to the group the link to this policy.** It can be found here: <http://www.ulch.org/ulch-response-to-covid-19>
 - **All groups that meet offsite should keep a record of participants** (online or on paper) that could be made available if needed.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS FOR GATHERINGS, STAFF, AND ALL USERS

Meeting inside, outside, or offsite

- **Before planning to meet in person, consider:**
 - As leaders and groups, **thoughtfully discern when it is compelling to meet at church** or offsite in person, and when meeting online will work well. Meeting together at church or offsite, one may unknowingly expose many to increased risk of COVID-19.
 - **Gathering in person will pressure some to take risks** that are not in the best interest of their health, or their household's health.
 - **If meeting in person**, consider ways for those uncomfortable with physically gathering to still participate. Contact the Church Administrator if computer access is needed.
- **When possible, meet outside (patio, courtyard, etc.).**
 - Place chairs 6 feet apart (and do not switch chairs).
 - Bring your own chair, when possible.
 - Wipe down chairs and surfaces after use.
 - Individuals may bring their own coffee/water in a personal-use container.
 - **Wearing masks is required if 6 foot physical distancing is not maintained.**
 - When meeting outdoors, try to plan ahead to avoid using the restrooms, but if necessary you may use the restroom by the lounge.
- **Limit the need for indoor gatherings when possible. If meeting indoors:**
 - Wear masks.
 - Wipe down chair arms, surfaces and door handles after use.

- Observe a 6 foot distance between people and notice the taped indicators on chairs and tables.
- **How many people can use various spaces in our facility?** Group gatherings must not exceed 50% of total room occupancy. We have considered the potential of distancing in each of our spaces.
 - Library 7 people,
 - Chapel 12 people,
 - Lounge 14 people,
 - Youth Room 10 people,
 - Heritage Hall 24 people,
 - Fellowship Hall 25 people,
 - Courtyard (sidewalk areas only) 10 people, (including grassy areas) 15 people.
 - **These areas are closed to use:** main kitchen, lounge kitchenette, women's restroom in the upper level of the education wing, nursery. The fellowship hall, and the sanctuary are closed to use unless by special agreement.
- **All gatherings (inside, outside, offsite) should be scheduled** through the church administrator (ulch@ulch.org).
- **Start times for onsite gatherings will be staggered** to lessen the number of people passing each other in halls and doors.
- **This Covid-19 Preparedness plan includes building users, community users, and other renters.**

Worship Life

- **Sunday Mornings.** Though the governor has allowed for in-person worship at 50% 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.
 - Even when we do worship in-person:
 - We will consider how to make live-streaming available.
 - We will consider how varied music is included and avoid singing and humming.
 - We will consider alternate ways for sharing the peace and Holy Communion.
- **Evening Services and other small services.**
 - Twice monthly evening services are online.
 - In good weather, we are beginning small backyard and courtyard services:
 - These opportunities will include a short service with spoken prayer, scripture, poetry, music, and other engagement.
 - Distance of greater than 6 feet will be maintained.
 - Masks will be worn (if you have questions, speak with Pastor Jen).
 - Participants will bring their own chairs and waterbottles; no refreshments will be provided.
- **Funerals.** Small in-person graveside services are possible at this time. Larger in-person funerals and memorial services will need to wait.
 - The pastors and worship leaders will provide online services, live streaming, and other ways to make space for grief and support.

- **Weddings.** Small in-person weddings may be possible, particularly when outdoors. Consult with the lead pastor.

Staff

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaitth.pdf> (See pp 1 - 6)

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

Food and Drink

- No coffee or food preparation will be available inside or outside the building.
- Please refrain from using either of the church kitchens (lower level main kitchen or lounge kitchenette).
- PEASE Academy (renter) will follow arrangements for pre-packaged lunch meals for staff and students.
- LCM will follow arrangements for providing pre-packaged snacks and catered meals.

Restrooms

- The number of people in a multi-stall restroom is limited to only one person at a time, with a waiting line (6 feet apart) outside the door.
- The upper level women's restroom is closed during this period.
- The restroom near the lounge is the primary restroom for use during activities on the patio or in the courtyard.
- The restroom in the nursery and the child care space is closed to use during this period.
- Signage will be placed on the restroom doors indicating these guidelines.
- Cleaning occurs according to MDH recommendations.

Community Groups or Individuals

- **At this time we are limiting the use of the building by community groups.**
- **In some situations groups may be able to arrange** use of outside space (patio or courtyard) or limited inside space. We are only able to offer space when staff is onsite or when other arrangements have been made, and when the space isn't already reserved by other groups.
- **Questions about this use** can be directed to the lead pastor or church administrator.
- For groups meeting only outside on days with threat of **inclement weather**, please watch the weather forecast and reschedule or cancel as necessary.

Music lessons and rehearsals on site:

- Keyboard, string and percussion instruments only
- Consult with staff for cleaning procedures and other standard procedures
- No voice lessons

- No wind or brass instruments

PEASE Academy

- **PEASE Academy is expected to maintain their COVID-19 preparedness plan** based on the guidance of MDH and PEASE Academy's school district.
- COVID-19 preparedness plans between both entities (ULCH and PEASE Academy) are to be reviewed regularly as needed in relation to local and national conditions.

Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM)

- **Lutheran Campus Ministry-Twin Cities follows their own procedures for programming.** Conversation and coordination will occur regularly between LCM and ULCH regarding building usage.

When someone becomes infected:

- **If someone who has been in the church building becomes ill with COVID-19**, they should notify the lead pastor or church administrator.
- **Church staff would contact the Minnesota Department of Health** to follow their guidance. The sign in sheet from our entrance or other lists of participants would be shared with the Minnesota Department of Health if requested. **Minnesota Department of Health*: 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.**
- **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.
- **If it is determined that someone with a COVID-19 like illness or having tested positive** has been around the church building, the church will contact the local public health authorities and follow their guidance regarding follow-up and notification of individuals. **Minnesota Department of Health*: 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.**
- ***Minnesota Department of Health:** Infectious Disease, Epidemiology, Prevention and Control Division

Outdoor Community Space and Unsheltered Neighbors

- **University Lutheran Church of Hope provides space for outdoor public (non-scheduled) use** during daylight hours, particularly on the east side of the building, on and near the patio. Guidelines for responsible gathering are posted near both patio entrances and include (not limited to) the following:
 - **No more than 10 people** may be gathered at one time on the patio
 - When it is not possible to maintain appropriate physical distance, **wear a mask.** University Lutheran Church of Hope has masks for those who do not have one.
 - **Church property**, including the building, outdoor art, and the gardens, must be respected and cared for. Failure to do so may result in someone being asked to leave the property.
 - Tents and other shelters are not allowed on church property. Open fires are not allowed on church property. Alcohol and/or other mood-altering substances are not allowed on church property.

- As a public space, University Lutheran Church of Hope is in relationship with unsheltered neighbors in the community who seek rest and shelter on the property. **When engaging with unsheltered neighbors, staff and leadership should follow these guidelines:**
 - **Limit engagement to as few key leaders** as possible. Choose 1-2 point people to function as primary contacts for unsheltered neighbors and questions or concerns about public space use by our neighbors.
 - **Always maintain 6 feet of distance** when engaging with unsheltered neighbors.
 - **Always wear a mask** when engaging with unsheltered neighbors.
 - **Provide masks, hand-washing, and hand-sanitizer** to unsheltered neighbors without access to these resources. Additional masks and hand sanitizer will be kept in Nick Tangen's office.
 - **Avoid handling our neighbors' belongings.** If a leader must handle an unsheltered neighbor's belongings, they should use disposable gloves and thoroughly wash their hands immediately after.
 - **Distribute the Handbook of the Streets** to those neighbors who need connections to health and housing services.
 - **Provide or post educational resources about COVID19** and guidelines for limiting exposure.

Facilities Cleaning

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaitth.pdf> (pp 7-8)

- **Our primary cleaning** is contracted through ABM and includes **protocols** for COVID-19 sanitation.
- **We ask that users wipe down** the arms of chairs, surfaces, and door handles at the end of their time.
- Spray bottles and wipes will be available at the entrance tables and in all rooms

Building and ventilation protocols

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaitth.pdf> (see pp. 6 - 7)

- The ULCH Facilities Committee will review these guidelines and follow up as appropriate.

Resources

Minnesota Department of Health - Home Page website:

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

Minnesota Department of Health website pages related to COVID-19. Click on Community and Faith-based organizations:

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

Supporting documents from the Minnesota Department of Health for Community and Faith-based organizations:

Minnesota Department of Health: Guidance for Safe Celebrations and Events (July 31, 2020)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf>

Minnesota Department of Health, Industry Guidance for Safely Reopening, Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals guidance for safely reopening (August 13, 2020)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health, Guidance for Caring for People in their Homes (July 22, 2020)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/visitingathome.pdf>

Minnesota Department of Health, Guidance for Gatherings, Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, and Ceremonies (July 28, 2020)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaith.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Considerations for Community-Based Organizations and Faith-based Organizations

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Gatherings and Community Events

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>

City of Minneapolis - Coronavirus updates

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

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/6Z0ucrr-z43TtDG4QSDA_EqW466f6is2yVL-vALmky9U3BQO1DwY7pDYetnC86r_1FTMzLcRO-xQs63?continueMode=true

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-k-aye-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>

A Washington Post article about COVID-19 racial disparities:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/04/07/coronavirus-is-infecting-killing-black-americans-an-alarmingly-high-rate-post-analysis-shows/?arc404=true>

Additional information from Johns Hopkins about racial disparities:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>