

## University Lutheran Church of Hope COVID 19 Preparedness Plan September 1, 2021

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.’”*

-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: Opening Our Life Together, Spring 2021

*“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

*“Some congregations are starting to come back together for in-person worship services after a year together online. While Covid persists, the in-person experience needs to be modified pretty dramatically. Folks miss singing together, sharing a meal, and physically embracing one another. But coming back together doesn’t mean we get to do those things anytime soon. How do we prepare the space and the people for a very different experience, one that will continue to be shared with those who gather online? It’s a short-term responsibility and longer-term opportunity. Let’s design and communicate an experience that has a Covid-safe social contract and honors the grief and trauma people carry with them. Let’s practice personal responsibility and mutual accountability so that the most vulnerable, traumatized, hesitant, or unfamiliar person there can say, ‘When I was ready to show up, this community kept its word and their behavior valued me.’”*

-Rev. Meta Herrick Carlson, Pastor and Writer, <https://www.metaherrickcarlson.com/blog/im-going-in>, 2021

*“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.”*

-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](mailto:jenn@ulch.org), 612-331-5988

**Secondary Contact:** Nathan Obrestad, Church Administrator, [nathano@ulch.org](mailto: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 continues to be an evolving pandemic. While some have received vaccinations, others have not yet and variants are still emerging. The principle of prevention and risk minimization guides this plan. This plan provides procedures that reflect how we live in community with COVID-19, caring for the most vulnerable among us.

**Link here to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) 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 continue to utilize meeting online, and are making space for outdoor activities and meetings, and some indoor gatherings.
  - Over the last many months our worship practices have evolved: for a long while we worshipped only online, this summer we adapted to hybrid and added some outdoor in-person services along with Zoom/YouTube, **and this fall we will offer weekly in-person options alternating between indoors in the Sanctuary and outdoors, while still offering Zoom/YouTube.** As we monitor the spread of the virus and particularly the Delta variant, there may come a time when we will pull back further and again use only Zoom/YouTube.
  - We recognize that some communities and demographics are affected disproportionately by the effects of COVID-19 and vaccination availability. In creating this procedure we seek to **contribute to racial equity.**
  - **The staff and leaders are ready to support you** with creative tools (e.g. Zoom, Facetime, etc) for meeting, fellowship, worship, support and individual conversation and pastoral care.
  - **As groups are discerning where and how to meet**, please contact Pastor Jen Nagel (lead pastor) or Nathan Obrestad (church administrator) for additional consultation.
  - **When the weather is mild, enjoy gathering outdoors** whenever possible, and use outdoor space for socializing.

- **Prevention Strategies**
  - **At all times:**
    - **If you believe you are sick** (COVID-19 related or any infectious illness), please do not attend events at ULCH or offsite at other venues. Contact a healthcare provider for consultation.
    - **We strongly encourage vaccination whenever it is possible.** We understand vaccination to be a social responsibility. It is done for the good of the many, and something that we can do to show respect and responsibility for those who cannot be vaccinated or still await vaccination, and those in high-risk categories, given age or underlying conditions. Any risk of exposure that one person takes on is a risk that the whole household is also taking on.  
[About COVID-19 Vaccine - Minnesota Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://state.mn.us/about-covid-19-vaccine)
    - **As you venture out, assess your individual risk** for yourself, your family and the community.
    - **Recommended preventive measures** will continue to be followed by ULCH as described by the Minnesota Department of Health.
    - **These policies relate to staff, volunteers and all who use Hope's building and grounds.**
  - **Wearing Masks, Keeping Distance, and Washing Hands**
    - **Outdoors** wear a mask when distancing is not possible, and as you desire.
    - **Indoors** for worship, meetings and gatherings masks are to be worn by all (vaccinated or unvaccinated) except children under two years old and those with health reasons.
    - **We will continue to keep distance in worship spaces.** Musicians and leaders who are able to keep great distance or are vaccinated may remove masks for leading.
    - **Staff and volunteers working alone** in private office spaces do not need to wear masks.
    - **Bring your own mask if you are able.** A supply of disposable masks is available.
    - **Note regarding masks:** 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.
    - **Wash hands** regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer (60% alcohol). Reminder signs are posted throughout the building.
- **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, and service providers that entry to the building acknowledges the lack of any of the symptoms on the checklist.

- **Scheduling**
  - **At this time it is 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 Hope Connections small groups, book group, and recreational events.)
  - Please schedule all events through the church administrator.
  - We strive to be stewards of the space, clean thoroughly, be hospitable and follow prevention practices. Scheduling makes this possible.
  
- **When gathering offsite, please use this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan as guidance for your event.**
  - **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>

**SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS FOR GATHERINGS, STAFF, AND ALL USERS**

Moving through this pandemic, we will continue to honor the need and desire for distancing. We all have different comfort levels regarding distancing. We ask that you thoughtfully consider your needs and the needs of others as you are welcomed back into shared spaces.

	<b>Inside - Expectations</b>	<b>Outside - Expectations</b>
<p><b>Worship Gatherings</b> (Sundays, Midweek) *<a href="https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf">https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Sanctuary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are required</li> <li>• Follow seating indicators in the pews/chairs</li> <li>• Singing* - congregational singing with a mask on</li> <li>• Open doors and windows when possible for increased air circulation</li> <li>• Seek alternate ways to share the peace from a distance</li> <li>• Share Holy Communion keeping greater distance</li> <li>• Children’s tables will be available for each family (rather than kids massed together)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Parking lot, Courtyard, Patio:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are optional when distance can be kept</li> <li>• Distance with mutual consent</li> <li>• Singing - may sing with or without masks</li> <li>• Seek alternate ways to share the peace from a distance</li> <li>• Share Holy Communion keeping greater distance, servers wearing masks</li> <li>• Ushers, greeters, and those providing hospitality, please wear masks</li> <li>• A Zoom and YouTube option is available</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key leaders may remove masks when essential</li> <li>• Sanitizer available.</li> <li>• A Zoom and YouTube option is available</li> <li>• We are not currently using the chapel because of its small size and lack of airflow</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Meetings, Faith Formation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are required</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• Schedule our larger spaces where greater distance and circulation is possible (consider Room 206, the Lounge, Fellowship Hall, Heritage Hall, the Youth Room)</li> <li>• Open doors and windows when possible for increased air circulation</li> <li>• Zoom is available for a hybrid option.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are optional when distance can be kept</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• Zoom is available for a hybrid option</li> <li>• Have a mask available for building access</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activities with Children</b> (Sunday School-This fall Sunday School will be held hybrid with an outdoor option and a Zoom option. Family Outdoor Activities-Every other month we seek to offer an outdoor gathering for families with kids.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are required</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• Strongly limit in-person inside activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are optional when distance can be kept-each family will make its own decision</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• Zoom is available for a hybrid option</li> <li>• Have a mask available for building access</li> </ul>
<p><b>Occasional Worship Services</b> (Weddings, Funerals, Special Services and Rituals)</p>	<p><b>Sanctuary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are required</li> <li>• Follow seating indicators in the pews/chairs</li> <li>• Singing* - congregational singing with a mask on</li> <li>• Key leaders and participants may remove masks when essential</li> <li>• Open doors and windows when possible for increased air circulation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Parking lot, Courtyard, Patio, Graveside, Park, Backyard:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are optional when distance can be kept</li> <li>• Distance with mutual consent</li> <li>• Singing - may sing with or without masks</li> <li>• See the Worship Gathering section above for specific guidance</li> <li>• A Zoom and YouTube option is available</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See the Worship Gathering section above for specific guidance</li> <li>• A Zoom and YouTube livestream option is available.</li> <li>• Zoom services are also possible for those who desire.</li> <li>• Indoor Funeral Receptions are not possible at this time at ULCH</li> <li>• Consider offering a reception outdoors following a service with boxed meals that could be picked up, people spread around to eat and fellowship, distance kept</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Music Making</b> (choir in worship, choir rehearsal, other music)</p> <p><i>Please consider your own situation as you decide to participate in music activities at ULCH. Consider risks to your own health and those around you. We honor your decision to pass on an activity. We are committed to your well-being and the well-being of the entire community.</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf">https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks required for rehearsals and choir leadership in worship</li> <li>• Honor distance and spacing.</li> <li>• Consider smaller ensembles of 2-4 people.</li> <li>• For brass and woodwind instruments, follow available guidance, including bell covers when possible.</li> <li>• Limit the length of rehearsals</li> <li>• Consult with our Minister of Worship and Music for all questions or cleaning procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoors preferred when possible</li> <li>• Honor distance and spacing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fellowship Time</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear masks</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• No food or drink indoors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wearing masks is optional</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• Bring your own beverages</li> <li>• Prepackaged items (e.g. popsicles) and easily individually served items (a cupcake on a napkin, or a donut set out) can be served</li> <li>• Avoid congregating around the serving table</li> <li>• Most weeks we will not offer food or beverages for</li> </ul>

		fellowship time. It may happen on special occasions.
<p><b>Food</b> (It's the social nature of food that's the issue...being in close proximity while cooking or serving, removing masks to eat, leaning in to converse.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear masks</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• Small groups can prepare food in the main kitchen/fellowship hall to be distributed outside or offsite</li> <li>• Pizza or bread oven preparation can be done in the main kitchen/fellowship hall</li> <li>• Indoor Fellowship Meals are not possible at this time</li> <li>• Small groups of volunteers or staff may elect to eat indoors when distance is kept</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are optional</li> <li>• Honor distance</li> <li>• When serving food, avoid congregating at the serving table</li> <li>• Aim to have someone serving the food (e.g. putting slices of pizza on one's plate, or scooping a hotdish)</li> <li>• Designate a volunteer to encourage distancing in the serving line and around tables</li> <li>• Volunteers and participants wipe tables after each use</li> <li>• When eating with masks removed, honor distance, arrange tables and chair to allow for distancing</li> <li>• For events, have someone designated to pour glasses of water or lemonade or coffee in advance (this lessens the time at the serving table)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nursery/Child Care</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With children under 12 unvaccinated, we are not currently providing a nursery or child care during worship</li> <li>• Families are encouraged to make their own decisions about safe practices for their family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We encourage use of the outdoor play space in the courtyard (supplies are kept inside the storage cabinet within the fenced area)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the sake of our community, full COVID-19 vaccination (or progress toward it) required beginning in September 2021</li> <li>• Masks may be removed if working alone in a space</li> <li>• Arrange with lead pastor to schedule working at church or offsite</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Visitation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear masks when visiting indoors and honor distance as able and appropriate</li> <li>• When fully vaccinated, and if comfortable, staff and volunteers may visit in hospitals, nursing homes, and other locations</li> <li>• Consider larger spaces with airflow that still offer privacy, for instance the sanctuary, chapel, or lounge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masks are optional if distance can be kept</li> <li>• Alternative visitation options can be sought: walks, sitting in the courtyard, window visits, etc.</li> <li>• Consider phone calls, Zoom and Facetime as alternates</li> </ul>
<p><b>Restrooms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit the number of people in a restroom (even multi-stall restrooms) to one, with a waiting line outside the door</li> <li>• The upper level women’s restroom and the restroom in the nursery/child care space are currently closed Signage will be placed on the restroom doors indicating these guidelines</li> <li>• Cleaning occurs according to MDH recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When at church for outside events, wear a masks when you need to access the building to use the restroom</li> <li>• We continue to provide an outside port-a-potty in the parking lot. During COVID there have been less public facilities available in the city and this is one option for our unsheltered neighbors and others. This restroom is cleaned by the providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Volunteers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaccinations when available are strongly encouraged for the sake of the whole community and necessary for those providing hospitality</li> <li>• Masks may be removed if working alone in a space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaccinations when available are strongly encouraged for the sake of the whole community and necessary for those providing hospitality</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use by Non Church Groups</b> (AA and support group, other rentals, etc.)</p>	<p><b>As scheduling allows, we welcome groups who abide by these procedures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See specific types of activity above.</li> <li>• Schedule through the Church Administrator</li> </ul>	<p><b>As scheduling allows, we welcome groups who abide by these procedures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See specific types of activity above.</li> </ul>

<p><b>P.E.A.S.E. Academy</b> (the Minnesota Transitions Charter School-MTCS-recovery high school with whom we share our building)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the policies of MTCS, PEASE Academy, and ULCH, opting for the more restrictive of the three</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the policies of MTCS, PEASE Academy, and ULCH, opting for the more restrictive of the three</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lutheran Campus Ministry</b> (LCM)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the policies of LCM and ULCH, opting for the more restrictive of the two</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the policies of LCM and ULCH, opting for the more restrictive of the two</li> </ul>

- **Facility related notes:**

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

- **We have an older facility with a very limited HVAC system.** Our system doesn't move around fresh air as some newer systems are able to do.. Because of this, when possible we've opted to be outdoors.
  - **Additionally, we have only a few spaces with air conditioning.** Given the heat of the summer and perhaps the fall, this is something considered in planning.
  - **Fans can be helpful but guidelines caution us to use them carefully,** taking care that fans move air, but not push potential virus from one person to the next. This means we will use fans to cool the sanctuary prior to worship, or to offer general air flow, but we won't point fans directly at those worshipping for this could more easily transmit the virus. These links offer further guidance related to fans: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaitH.pdf> (pp. 6 - 7) <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/communities-of-faith> [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html)
  - **Whenever possible in worship and elsewhere,** we will open windows and doors to increase outdoor air flow.
  - **Our primary cleaning** is contracted through ABM and includes protocols for COVID-19 sanitation.
  - Sanitizing wipes are available throughout the building for use as needed.

- **When someone becomes infected:**

- **If it is determined that someone with a COVID-19 like illness or having tested positive for COVID-19** has been around the church building, they should notify the lead pastor or church administrator.
  - **Church staff would contact the Minnesota Department of Health** to follow their guidance. Minnesota Department of Health, Infectious Disease, Epidemiology, Prevention and Control Division: 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.
  - **While we are no longer keeping a sign in sheet at the doors,** our building schedule, staff, and group leaders have a sense of who is in and around the building for various activities.
  - **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.

## 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> (4/15/21)

Minnesota Department of Health, Guidance for Caring for People in their Homes (6/30/21)

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

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Considerations for Community-Based Organizations and Faith-based Organizations (1/21/21)

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

Centers for Disease Control: Covid Tracker

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>

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>

Additional information from Johns Hopkins about racial disparities:

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