

August 4, 2020

# LCN FAMILY

## CHURCH REOPENING

Every LCN member the task force group has spoken to has a longing to return to services in our beloved sanctuary, and to come back to some form of pre-VIRUS worship life. For many months, our in-sanctuary worship, music, fellowship and the sacrament of Holy Communion has been put on hold leaving us frustrated, exhausted and eager to adopt any and all practices to help contain and reduce the spread of COVID. As we pass through time, conversations evolve into when will we open for worship, or, are we remaining closed?

Casper ter Kuile writes in *The Power of Ritual*: “Where religious institutions have been mistaken... is that they have fallen in love with a specific solution, rather than forever evolving to meet the need.” This pandemic world has taught us this premise and we are forever changed. We must reopen cautiously and appropriately while at the same time meet the needs of our congregation and community on an ever, ongoing basis.

In our efforts to Love God, Love Others and Serve All, it is the purpose of the LCN Task Force to strike a balance. To open LCN as soon as it is safe to do so, and at the same time embrace the new learnings we have discovered thus far during this pandemic. The Task Force has developed guidelines that will be adopted in stages.

During **Stage 1** LCN will have no live services. We anticipate that Stage 1 will expire sometime in early September. A copy of the Stage 1 Guidelines is attached. These guidelines have been adopted by our Church Council.

**Stage 2** is slated to begin early in September. During Stage 2, we will consider small group worship outside and in alternative settings while maintaining our online worship service. We may also have a scheduled prayer hour inside the sanctuary. The duration of Stage 2 is yet to be determined. We will keep you posted as we learn more.

**Stage 3** will begin when MA COVID numbers are low and relatively stable. During this Stage it is possible to begin having small worship services inside LCN for those who feel comfortable doing so. The online worship option will continue to be available.

**Stage 4** will be our return back to some form of normal worship. This will be enacted when testing, vaccines, and efficacious treatment are standardized and widely available.

These are really hard realities! We also know this is a disappointment to many, but we want to do all we can to keep the LCN family and our community safe. We will continue to monitor reports and statistics, listen to health officials and leaders, and seek the Lord for wisdom and guidance on how to navigate through this time. But because we love and serve others these guidelines cannot be ignored.

There have been many positive things that people are experiencing during this historically unprecedented time. New ways have been developed to worship. Many of us have become more aware of injustices. There seems to be more focused contact with individuals through prayer. We more fully cherish the connection we have with people. We are all being challenged which can and has brought newness.

We encourage you to join in praying for God's divine healing, protection, and peace in our families, communities and nation. Our God is bigger than this virus and we know we will be delivered from "our journey through the desert" and all things will work together for good.

If you have any concerns, questions, information or input to share with the reopening task force please reach out to us. We would love to hear from you.

Yours in Christ,

*The LCN Reopening Task Force*

Rita Busick  
Paul Eldrenkamp  
Kathryn Lange  
Don Strange  
Pastor Kari Jo Verhulst