



July 22, 2020

Dear Epiphany Church Family,

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change..." Psalm 46 verses 1-2*

Our lives and ministry have faced a great deal of change over the last four months. We pray that you and your family have found ways to support one another and remain connected in your relationships. Here at Epiphany, we have responded to these changes by being intentional about communicating our plans for worship during this extraordinary time when we as a congregation are kept from gathering in our church building due to the restrictions and guidelines of CDC and SCDHEC as it relates to the virus pandemic. We are writing this letter to share with you our plans for returning to worship in our church building.

In May, the Council appointed a Transition Team to review recommendations given to us from the SC Synod office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One of the initial steps in these recommendations was to appoint a Transition Team to lead the congregation. After three video conference meetings and Council's review, the Transition Team is presenting the enclosed "Transition Team Group Plan" to the congregation.

We hope that you can take the time to read through all that has been identified as essential in our preparing to return to our indoor worship setting and use of our church building. Your input or comments to the Transition Team and Council are welcome as we begin to take the necessary steps toward returning to indoor gatherings for worship and other ministry activities.

Yours in Christ,

Members of the Transition Team and Council

## **Transition Task Group Plan**

The Transition Team has prepared the following Plan for Reopening In-person meetings in the church. The team has incorporated the Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith CDC and the recommendations from the South Carolina Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This plan will be updated as new information is provided to us.

### **Guidance from the Synod**

“As you move forward we ask you to be especially mindful of people in your congregation who may be at risk to gathering, and we ask the Church Councils are mindful of the needs and concerns of their pastors and deacons. This is a time when we all need to live and give Grace: There is no need to rush right now, but rather to make careful decisions that include all the people who will be involved”.

### **Timing**

Follow CDC and SC DHEC recommendations. Allow for at least 14 days of declining cases and a decrease in percent of positive test cases before gathering in groups or moving to the next phase of opening spaces.

Continue to offer on-line services and/or outdoor services for those at high risk

Limit number of each gathering according to the latest CDC & Synod Guidelines

Do not offer nursery or VBS at this time

Do not offer food or fellowship meals at this time

Postpone all in person meetings or small group gatherings such as Sunday School, committee meetings. Use Zoom or meetings as much as possible

The Mission Council will monitor current data from the SC DHEC to determine when other entities should be allowed to use our facility

### **Member Responsibilities**

Members should stay at home if they are sick or immune compromised

Face coverings are strongly requested to protect everyone

Practice social distancing (6 feet) always and avoid handshakes

Members should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer prior to entering the church and as needed while in the church

Members are encouraged to notify the church if they become ill with the COVID virus and have been in the church.

## **Cleaning & Sanitation**

Follow CDC Guidelines for disinfecting spaces. Once we return to weekly indoor services, our cleaning service will do a weekly disinfectant clean in addition to normal services.

Cleaning Service will conduct sanitizing clean of high touch surfaces weekly.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects between use

Use sanitizing spray on high touch surfaces between services

Provide hand sanitizer stations at the entrance into the church, in the gathering area and in the sanctuary

Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned or sanitized. Remove all hymnal and books from the pews

Take steps to ensure that all water systems (drinking fountains & ice machine) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown

## **Social Distancing**

Mark pews at 6 feet intervals. Families are encouraged to sit together but maintain the recommended distance between families

Block off every other row of pews

Do not offer coffee hour or socialization inside before or after worship

Ushers should release the congregation by pews to limit number in the aisle

## **Signage**

- Handwashing in bathrooms
- Welcome For the Safety of All Please use face covering, Please practice social distancing, Use handwashing/sanitizer upon entering, Use of bathrooms limited to 1 person/family unit at a time (at the Church entrance and entry into the sanctuary)
- Bathrooms – Limit to one person or family group
- Signage to block off kitchen/hallway
- Signage to block every other pew
- Signage for sanitation stations

## **Music**

Use a spoken liturgy rather than a sung liturgy to minimize the dangers from aerosols.

Use soloist or limited choir members and practice social distancing

## **Offering**

Encourage electronic giving methods

Offering plate is neither circulated nor presented at the altar. Placement at the entry to Sanctuary.

Offering tellers should sanitize frequently and sit at a distance

## **Communion**

Communion preparers wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds prior to preparing communion.

Gloves can be used but can be deceiving. If a glove touches a contaminated space and then a plate or tray, it still passes the contamination on.

Do not use either common cup or intinction

Do not kneel at the altar

Worship MLT will determine best method for communion

If using plastic cups, those preparing wash their hands, then place glasses in trays sufficiently spaced so that communicants can take their cup without touching the others.

Pastor and communion assistants should wash hands prior to celebrating communion

Those distributing wafers should try to avoid touching communicants' hands as much as possible

Communion assistants should commune last.

Changes in Practice to Prevent Transmission

Close off or block access to the Kitchen area and hallway

Prop open inside and outside doors, so no one touches a doorknob or handle and to increase ventilation

## **Communication of the Plan**

The plan should be communicated to the congregation prior to re-opening for indoor services.

Possible modes of communication include:

- Proclaimer – short commentaries
- Proclaimer – link to the full document
- Special email to members
- Link on the Church Website
- Link on the Church APP
- Church Facebook page
- Video from church leaders
- Direct mailings to member