

Trinity Lutheran Church Greenville, SC  
Return to Worship and Gathering Guidelines During COVID-19  
September 24, 2020

The Trinity Lutheran Church Coronavirus Transition Team has met via Zoom every Friday afternoon since the first week in May 2020 to discuss the evolving guidelines for COVID-19 prevention, and how to apply them to ensure safe worship and fellowship opportunities for our congregation, as well as facility use by the community.

In the summer, guidelines were developed for weddings, funerals, and baptisms in the sanctuary, but all other worship has remained virtual. Sunday School, book clubs, youth groups, and even Vacation Bible School have been virtual. Small out of doors group gatherings and 'drive throughs' have been held, with use of face masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene to make sure to optimize the safety of participants.

The guidelines established for the in-person gatherings were based on recommendations from the CDC, SC DHEC, and ELCA, which at times varied from each other, and have changed over time.

Initial guidelines all recommended slow re-opening in phases, with each phase allowing more people to gather, always with caution regarding individuals at high risk for severe illness, and with masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, and appropriate cleaning of the space included. Moving to a new phase required a 'clear downward trajectory in the number of reported symptoms, confirmed cases, and/or positive tests for COVID-19 for two consecutive weeks' as well as 'robust testing' and adequate local hospital capacity. Any increase in cases was to result in a return to the previous phase, until a two-week downward trajectory in cases was again achieved. Phase 1 allows gatherings of up to 10 people; Phase 2 allows gatherings of up to 50 people, and Phase 3 allows gatherings of more than 50 people. Persons over 65, or with hypertension, chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes mellitus, obesity, asthma, or compromised immunity are not to participate. Shorter gathering times, and larger gathering spaces including outdoors, with good air circulation, are known to decrease risk. Anyone with known COVID-19, an illness consistent with COVID-19, or recent COVID-19 exposure is not to attend.

In South Carolina, COVID cases have in general remained high relative to the rest of the country, and the numbers have fluctuated widely, with no clear, prolonged downward trajectory. The Coronavirus Transition Team has chosen the safety of the congregation as a priority, and we have been fortunate at Trinity to have wonderful virtual Sunday morning and Wednesday evening worship services.

At this time, the overall trend in COVID cases in the upstate has been downward, so Phase 1 gatherings (up to 10 people) can be implemented immediately. It is hoped that COVID cases continue to decline so that Phase 2 gatherings (up to 50 people), including in-person worship in the sanctuary, can begin by mid-October.

Guidelines for Phase 1 groups are as follows:

- Meetings may be held in the designated space provided appropriate precautions are followed by all. Meetings must be approved and scheduled through the church office to ensure availability and scheduling for cleaning.
- Total number of attendees will not exceed 10
- Anyone with recent COVID-19 infection must wait 10 days from the onset of illness before attending
- Anyone not feeling well, running a temperature above 100.5, or with recent (within 2 weeks) known coronavirus exposure must not attend. Temperature will be checked on arrival at the gathering and anyone with a recording of 100.5 or more must leave immediately.
- Anyone who becomes ill within 10 days of attending the meeting must notify the church office immediately
- Persons at risk for severe COVID-19 illness (including those over age 65, or with heart or lung disease, or hypertension, or diabetes, or immune suppression) should not attend
- Hand sanitizer will be available in the meeting space and bathrooms, and should be used when entering and exiting the building
- The organizer of the meeting will record each attendee's name, telephone number, and documentation of temperature under 100.5 and will provide it to the church office immediately after the meeting, to allow rapid

contact tracing should an exposure occur. The log can be slid under the church office door if the office is closed, or emailed to Kay Cook (kmcook@trinitylutheran.ws.)

- All attendees must bring a mask and wear it the entire time
- Attendees must maintain six feet of distance from each other at all times, including while entering and leaving the space, and while seated.
- Doors will be propped open to prevent the necessity of touching the knobs and handles
- Attendees will greet each other with a wave, bow or head nod, as there can be no hugging, hand shaking, or other physical contact.
- All utilized rooms will be cleaned and sanitized following the meeting if the space will be used again within 48 hours