COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for First Lutheran Church

First Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy facility for all our members, guests, and visitors.

To ensure we have a safe and healthy facility, First Lutheran Church has developed the following COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Church leadership and members are all responsible for implementing this plan. Our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our facility and communities, and that requires full cooperation among our leadership and members. Only through this cooperative effort can we establish and maintain the safety and health of all persons in our facilities. The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan is administered by the pastor and church council, who maintain the overall authority and responsibility for the plan. However, leadership and members are equally responsible for supporting, implementing, complying with and providing recommendations to further improve all aspects of this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.

First Lutheran Church’s leadership and council have our full support in enforcing the provisions of this plan. Our members are our most important assets. First Lutheran Church is serious about safety and health and protecting its members.

Member involvement is essential in developing and implementing a successful COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. We have involved our members in this process by creating a team to consider suggestions and feedback.

First Lutheran Church’s COVID-19 Preparedness Plan follows the guidance developed by the state of Minnesota, which is based upon Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines for COVID-19, Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA) statutes, rules and standards, and Minnesota’s relevant and current executive orders. This plan also follows guidelines put forth by the Northeastern Minnesota Synod and the ELCA. It addresses:

• ensuring sick members stay home and prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;

• social distancing – members must be at least six-feet apart;

• member hygiene and source controls;

• building and ventilation protocol;

• facility cleaning and disinfection protocol;

• drop-off, pick-up and delivery practices and protocol; and

• communications and training practices and protocol.

First Lutheran Church has reviewed and incorporated the industry guidance provided by the state of Minnesota for the development of this plan.

Conditions and circumstances included in the guidance and addressed in the plan that are specific to our church include: additional protections and protocols for members, guests and visitors; for personal protective equipment (PPE); for access and assignment; for sanitation and hygiene; for handwashing; for distancing and barriers; for managing occupancy; to limit face-to-face interaction; and for receiving or exchanging payment.

Members have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

First Lutheran Church requires members who are exhibiting symptoms, feel unwell, or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive to COVID-19 to refrain from coming to church services or entering the building.

 First Lutheran Church has also implemented a policy for informing members if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 at their facility and requiring them to quarantine for the required amount of time. Attendance will be recorded at worship services, funerals, etc. for the purpose of contact tracing in the event an attendee tests positive for COVID-19. In addition, a policy has been implemented to protect the privacy of members’ health status and health information. No identifying information will be released during exposure notification.

# Social distancing

Social distancing of at least six feet will be implemented and maintained between members, guests and visitors in the facility through the following engineering and administrative controls:

* Pews will be taped off to enforce physical distancing of at least 6 feet between members of different households
* Maximum capacity of the sanctuary is 200 people; therefore, 50% capacity of the sanctuary would be 100 people.
* Members will be seated front to back and dismissed by rows back to front by ushers
* Members will be required to leave the building when being ushered out. Visiting can take place in the open-air parking lot maintaining physical distancing.
* Overflow from the sanctuary will be seated in Memorial Hall, at tables spaced appropriately for physical distancing
* Special music will be by a soloist, in the balcony wearing a mask or face shield, properly distanced from others in the balcony
* There will be no passing of the peace, no passing of offering plates, no singing or unison speaking
* Any bulletins will be placed in pews beforehand and taken with people when they leave
* Exterior and sanctuary doors will be propped open
* Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance
* Masks will be required and available for those without
* Pew cards, Bibles, hymnals, and pew cushions will be removed and stored
* There will be no communion during in-person worship
* A greeter/usher will write down names (and phone numbers) of people who attend for contact tracing purposes
* An offering plate will be placed in the narthex

If people not living in the same household ride-share, masking is strongly encouraged.

Any questions and concerns should be brought to the pastor or a member of the church council. Protective supplies, including masks and hand sanitizer will be available at the church entrances. The church office will be responsible for maintaining a supply of these products.

# Member hygiene

Basic infection prevention measures are being implemented at our facilities at all times. All members, guests and visitors to the facility are required to wash or sanitize their hands prior to or immediately upon entering the facility. Hand-sanitizer dispensers (that use sanitizers of greater than 60% alcohol) are at entrances and locations in the facility so they can be used for hand hygiene in place of soap and water, as long as hands are not visibly soiled.

Members, guests, and visitors are being instructed to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face, in particular their mouth, nose and eyes, with their hands. They should dispose of tissues in the trash and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette will be supported by making tissues and trash receptacles available to all workers and visitors. All visitors to the church are required to wear a mask.

If a member attended a service and then tests positive for Covid-19, the member will contact either Pastor Erin (218-506-8072), the church office (218-283-2208) or Council President Fred Wilson (218-324-1128).

# Facility building and ventilation protocol

Operation of the facility includes necessary sanitation, assessment and maintenance of building systems, including water, plumbing, electrical, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

The maximum amount of fresh air is being brought into the facility, air recirculation is being limited, and ventilation systems are being properly used and maintained. Steps are also being taken to minimize air flow blowing across people.

# Facility cleaning and disinfection protocol

Regular practices of cleaning and disinfecting have been implemented, including a schedule routine cleaning and disinfecting of floors and seating areas, including restrooms and meeting rooms. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting is being conducted of high-touch areas, including phones, keyboards, touch screens, controls, door handles, elevator panels, railings, etc.

A team has been assembled to clean and disinfect areas during the week that have been used for worship services. The team will use products on the CDC approved list of cleaning products.

# Drop-off, pick-up and delivery practices and protocol

Packages are dropped off without contact, and a dropbox can be provided for members when requested.

Communications and training practices and protocol

This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan was communicated to all members through the monthly newsletter, our website and social media, posting in the church building, with a summary on the church doors. Paper copies will be mailed as requested. This communication was done on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and necessary training was provided. Additional communication and training will be ongoing by the pastor and church council as needed. Training will be provided to all members who did not receive the initial training.

The pastor and church council will monitor how successfully the program has been implemented, and make changes as necessary. Everyone is to take an active role and collaborate in carrying out the various aspects of this plan, and update the protections, protocols, work-practices and training as necessary. This COVID-19 Preparedness Plan has been certified by the First Lutheran Church council and the plan was posted throughout the facility and made readily available to members. It will be updated as necessary by the Church Council.

# Additional protections and protocols for the church office

## Screening and policies for employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19

Workers have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If a worker shows signs and symptoms of COVID-19, they are to report this to the pastor and the council president. They will not come into the church building, and duties will be reassigned as necessary to cover necessary operations.

First Lutheran has the following sick leave policy in place:

* the Office Administrator has 5 days of sick leave available as of January 1, and can use these days to care for themselves or an immediate family member if ill.
* No policy in place for the pastor or bookkeeper.

First Lutheran has also implemented a policy for informing workers if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 at their workplace and requiring them to quarantine for the required amount of time. Everyone entering the building is required to fill out a building log available at both church entrances. This sheet, which will include the person’s name, the date, and the times they were in the church building, will help leadership know who has been in the church building and who will need to be contacted in the event that a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19. In the event of exposure, the pastor or the council president will contact those who may have been in the building or in contact with the sick person.

In addition, a policy has been implemented to protect the privacy of workers’ health status and health information. If a person with COVID-19 has come into the church building, the identity of that person will not be revealed to protect health information.

## Social distancing

Social distancing is being implemented in the workplace through the following engineering and administrative controls: six feet of distance is being maintained between workers. Visits to the church office are discouraged, and disinfecting of surfaces will happen at the end of each day. Workers and visitors are prohibited from gathering in groups and confined areas, including elevators, and from using other workers’ personal protective equipment, phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, offices or other personal work tools and equipment.

## Housekeeping

Regular housekeeping practices are being implemented, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of work surfaces and equipment in areas of the building that are in use. Items and surfaces used during the day will be disinfected at the end of each day. The office administrator will be responsible for the main office and the women’s restroom. The pastor will be responsible for the pastor’s office, the men’s restroom, and other areas that have been used during the day.

Certified by:

President Fred Wilson Pastor Erin Coutts

Effective August 27, 2020