

# COVID-19 Prevention & Mitigation

## Immanuel Lutheran Church, Killeen, Texas

*Edited 03/10/2020 VWS*

Out of an abundance of care and concern for the health and well-being of the Immanuel Lutheran Church community, this document has been created to guide us in the implementation of best practices during the current outbreak of the Coronavirus strain known as COVID-19. It is important to note that these changes are only temporary and are being utilized in order to reduce the risk of transmission and protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

### I. Overview

#### A. Resources

1. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) will be considered our primary resources for information and recommendations.
2. Secondary sources of information may include the health department, local hospitals and school districts, nearby colleges and universities, Fort Hood, the ELCA Churchwide, and the NTNL Synod.

#### B. Contact Information

1. A full church directory in digital format will be distributed to the members of the Executive Committee and the Pastor.
2. The ability to email the entire congregation from outside the church office will be made available to the Executive Committee and the Pastor.
3. A list of phone numbers for church members with no access to email will be made available to the Executive Committee and the Pastor.

#### C. Communication

1. Important and time sensitive information will be released primarily via email, social media, and the church website.
2. Phone calls and text messaging will be used as a secondary form of communication.
3. Reminders will be shared via bulletin insert, worship slides, and verbal announcements whenever possible.

#### D. Hand Washing

1. Everyone is encouraged to use proper hand washing techniques as often as possible. The best defense against the spread of illness is to wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (the time it takes to pray the Lord's Prayer).
2. Hand sanitizer is only for those times when you don't have access to soap and water.
3. Keep your hands away from your face (eyes, nose, and mouth) and be sure to cough/sneeze into your elbow.

## E. Illness Protocol

### 1. Signs and Symptoms

- a) COVID-19: fever, cough, shortness of breath, symptoms appear 2-14 days after exposure
- b) Influenza: fever, cough, chills, sweats, congestion, sore throat, fatigue, weakness, muscle aches
- c) Allergies: sneezing, itchy nose or eyes, runny nose, watery eyes

### 2. COVID-19 Higher Risk Category

- a) Older Adults: The CDC considers this to be anyone over the age of 60 years old.
- b) Chronic Illness: diabetes, heart conditions, respiratory problems (including lung diseases such as asthma), those under treatment for cancer, any condition that weakens the immune system
- c) Immunocompromised: anyone with an immune system that is impaired or weakened either through medication or illness; those with compromised immune systems have a reduced ability to fight infections and diseases (like Coronavirus).

3. If you are sick, please stay home. We can't emphasize this enough. At this time, we want to be cautious and help prevent the potential spread of illness. This applies to church staff as well as volunteers and members.
4. If you are in the CDC's "higher risk" category, we understand if you feel the need to stay home during this time. Please let us know how we can best support you.
5. If you or someone you know is sick, please let the Pastor or church office staff know. Please don't visit the sick yourself.

## F. Offering

1. Please continue to give offering. When this is over, we still want to have a church. We support mission and ministry in the United States and the world through our giving in addition to providing salaries for staff and the upkeep of our facility.
2. Offering can be dropped off, mailed to the office, an electronic check can be sent from your bank, or consider signing up for Tithe.ly online giving.

## II. Stage 1 Protocols

### A. Worship

1. Peace: Sharing of the peace is removed from worship.
2. Offering: Offering plates will not be passed. They will be placed on tables that people will pass on their way to communion. Anyone handling the plates or what's contained in them (i.e. counters and whomever sets the plates out) will need to follow hand washing protocols.
3. Greeting: The Pastor will not be shaking hands after worship. Members are encouraged to refrain from handshaking and other physical contact at this time.
4. Worship Materials: Throw away bulletins after using. Refrain from using the hymnals. If you must use a hymnal, be sure to follow proper hand washing protocols after use.

5. Baptismal Font: Emptied of water and moved off to the side of the worship space. If there is a baptism, the font will be moved for that specific worship service, the bowl will be sanitized and filled, used for the baptism, and following worship will be drained, sanitized, and returned to its alternate location.
6. Attendance folders: These will be removed from the sanctuary and the practice temporarily suspended. Visitors will be invited to put their contact information on a note card and drop it into the offering plate when they come up for communion.

#### B. Holy Communion

1. Everyone assisting with communion will wash their hands with soap and water in the sacristy during the offering hymn. While waiting, Pastor will give a reminder announcement about communion practices.
2. The communion rail will not be used. Church goers will be released by ushers to come forward, but they will go directly to the pastor/communion assistant with the bread/wafers.
3. Bread/wafers will be dropped into hands to eliminate physical contact. Communion assistants will distribute the wine and grape juice by handing the cup to each person. Those needing grape juice should inform the communion assistant.
4. A bowl with a plastic trash liner will be sitting on a table up front for discarding used communion cups. After worship the bag will be removed, preferably by someone wearing gloves, and thrown away.
5. Those involved in the set-up and/or clean-up of communion (filling cups, putting out bread, setting the altar) should follow proper handwashing protocols and use the nitrile gloves provided in the sacristy.

#### C. Food and Drink

1. No food or drink will be served before, during, or after worship. This includes, but is not limited to: coffee, donuts, cookies, and other treats.
2. Water fountains will be sealed and covered to discourage use.
3. If Sunday school teachers and nursery attendants find it necessary to have snacks and drinks, the items must be individually packaged.
4. Potluck with a Purpose and Retirees and Friends Luncheon are temporarily suspended. Church goers are instead encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to share with local food banks and shelters.

### III. Stage 2 Protocols

#### A. Events and Activities

1. In general, the cancellation of church events and activities, including worship, will be made under the guidance of the CDC and/or the health department. Recommendations from other sources will be considered by the Executive Committee.

2. Board directors are trusted to make decisions about their meetings that fit their needs and comfort level. Please make sure that changes to meetings, especially cancellations, are quickly communicated to the Pastor and office staff, in addition to the board members.
3. Those who conduct other programs such as Bible studies, choir rehearsals, and other small groups that meet at the church should make decisions with their groups that best fit the needs and comfort level of the group members. All groups should immediately inform the Pastor and church staff of cancellations. Please note that the Executive Committee reserves the right to cancel events at any time.
4. Please consider utilizing programs like Zoom, Facebook messenger, and FaceTime to still have meetings even if you choose not to meet in person.

#### IV. Stage 3 Protocols

##### A. Cancellation Protocol

1. If, at any point, the congregation needs to cancel worship, we will communicate this information as quickly as possible via email, social media, and the church website.
2. If possible, we should do our best to communicate with local television and radio stations about closing. Some members, without access to internet, will need to be called.

##### B. Digital Worship

1. The Pastor will plan to lead an abbreviated online worship service in the event that regular worship services are cancelled.
2. Online services will be available for viewing on the church Facebook page and may include scripture, prayer, a message, and hymns that are in the public domain.
3. A print worship resource will be available via email and on the church website for those without access to Facebook.

##### C. Staff

1. When possible, staff will work from home.
2. As needed, staff will conduct conference calls with each other and the leadership of the congregation.