

Safely Worshiping Together

Guide for Regathering at St. Mark's

*⁹The commandments ... and any other commandment,
are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself."
¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Romans 13:9-10

Love for neighbor has been, and continues to be, the primary and motivating concern for all discussions and subsequent decisions related to gathering in person for worship. Paul's writing that "love does no wrong to a neighbor" continues to guide both the Celebrate Team and the Congregation Council. While there is no scenario in which the risk of exposure or illness is completely eliminated, it is with prayerful consideration that the following guidelines might help to minimize any risk as best as we can.

As a diverse community of believers, we acknowledge that the opinions regarding reopening the church for worship and subsequent precautions are as diverse as the members of the body. The following recommendations and guidelines are the result of significant discernment, prayer, and deliberation with consideration given to a variety of documents, agencies, and institutions (ELCA, Florida-Bahamas Synod, Center for Disease Control, Florida Department of Health, etc....) Lastly, these precautions are specific to our context, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, as we prepare to gather in person to worship God on July 5, 2020.

Preparing for Worship

At the core of our life in faith and worship is prayer. Continue to pray for our community, healthcare workers, elected officials, and all whose lives have been affected COVID-19 and its implications. Pray for the people of St. Mark's and its leadership.

Before attending in-person worship, please consider the following:

- If you or a member of your household has been exposed to COVID-19, please follow CDC guidelines for a 14-day quarantine.
- Be diligent in the washing of hands and adherence to physical distance recommendations and guidelines set forth by CDC and Florida Department of Health
- If you are in a vulnerable category (persons over 65 or prior medical conditions), we encourage you to remain home and worship via our live stream.
- Review the following guidelines for worship at St. Mark's before attending.

Bulletins will be made available by email and website on the Friday prior to worship. If you prefer, you may download the bulletin to your phone or tablet and bring that device, or you may print your own bulletin. Bulletins will be available upon arrival.

Gathering for Worship

- In accordance with the CDC and FDH, and with adherence to Jacksonville's mandate, masks are required while worshipping at St. Mark's.
- Please enter the building through either the back iron-gate (leading to the Courtyard Narthex entry), or by the front, double red doors.
- Maintain appropriate physical distance from one another as you gather.
- Be mindful of your surroundings and limit surface contact

- Once in the Narthex:
 - A greeter will take your temperature with a non-contact forehead thermometer.
 - Hand-sanitizer and gloves are available for your use.
 - Masks are provided for those who do not have their own. (Cloth masks are yours to keep, wash, and reuse)
- Pews are marked for seating at an appropriate physical distance. Please avoid the areas taped with an “X”
- Families and couples may sit together. All other individuals should maintain 6-feet of distance when choosing their seat.
- All hymnals, Bibles, papers, and pencils have been removed to reduce contact spread.

Worship

- Worship services will follow our traditional liturgy and look much the same as before with the following adjustments:
 - Bulletins will be available digitally on Friday. You may print your own or download to your device to bring. We will provide paper bulletins, preplaced in the pews.
 - Water has been removed from the baptismal font. For those who desire, seashells are available as a tangible reminder of baptism. Participants are invited to take one and keep it.
 - The offering plate will remain stationary in the back of the Nave by the font. You are invited to make your contribution to support St. Mark’s mission and ministry as you enter or exit worship.
 - Passing the peace – Please greet one another with a sign of Christ’s peace by saying “peace be with you,” or similar words. Please refrain from shaking hands and hugging.
 - All singing will be done sotto voce, which literally translates “under the voice.” Participants are invited to sing along, and we ask that you sing sotto voce – with a soft voice. Masks should be worn at all times.

Communion

- Both elements will be consecrated and offered.
- All bread is proportioned and packaged prior to service. Please know that your portion of bread includes a drop of wine.
- Gluten free, bread with grape juice, and plain bread will be available by request.
- Communion is received by processing down the center aisle to the altar rail, receiving your package of elements, and returning to your seat by the outside aisle.
- An usher will direct those seated on the choir side of the nave first, followed by those seated on the pulpit side. Please observe proper social distancing as you approach the presiding minister.
- Once all have returned to their seat, all will consume the elements together.

Leaving Worship

- As you leave worship, please be mindful of social and physical distancing.
- Greet each other with waves and gently spoken words.

- Please take your bulletin and bread wrapper with you and dispose of them at home. (Recycling your bulletin is encouraged!)
- Social conversation may take place on the church's front lawn or in the courtyard, but please don't block the entrances.

Additional Resources

- [**Center for Disease Control**](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- [**Florida Department of Health**](https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/)
<https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/>
- [**ELCA COVID-19 Worship Guidelines**](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Returning_to_In-person_Worship.pdf?_ga=2.175496736.345678105.1593712005-1538144426.1593712005)
https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Returning_to_In-person_Worship.pdf?_ga=2.175496736.345678105.1593712005-1538144426.1593712005
- [**Florida-Bahamas Synod COVID-19 Worship Plan**](https://fbsynod.com/returning-to-in-person-worship-guidelines/)
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