

## Good Shepherd Lutheran Church – Guidelines for Ministry during COVID-19

In March of 2020, we quickly shifted to a shelter-in-place model for ministry in compliance with St. Louis County orders. While the pandemic is still with us, there has been demonstrated success from social distancing measures in the St. Louis area. These efforts have allowed the re-opening of businesses and houses of worship with social distancing and capacity restrictions. Many of the aspects we value as a gathered faith community are also practices that hold the most risk (hugs, handshakes, sharing communion, singing, being together in confined space for 1 hour, etc.). This, combined with our care and concern for the health and safety of our members, has led us to take a more conservative approach to gathering in person.

**Background:** COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that humans are not protected against, thus it can cause illness. Illness may be mild to severe including death. Some individuals may not experience symptoms (asymptomatic). Regardless of the degree of illness, asymptomatic to severe, the virus can be spread to others. Currently, there is no vaccine and treatment is limited to minimizing symptoms and complications. In the United States and in Missouri, there have been more than the usual number of deaths caused by COVID-19. May 27, 2020 marked when 100,000 individuals died in the U.S. due to COVID-19.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (GSLC), has developed a plan to minimize the risk to its members and the church community. Below is a summary of a three-phased plan for ministry. Moving through these phases may occur after a minimum of 14 calendar days of a declining trend of the 7-day moving average of COVID-19 hospitalizations (in task force hospitals). (ie. Phase 1 at least 14 days, Phase 2, 28 days, Phase 3, 42 days). We will also consider the total COVID-19 hospitalizations, with a target of the 7-day moving average of COVID-19 hospitalizations in the range of 225-250 (in task force hospitals) when moving from Phase 2 to Phase 3. As knowledge regarding the virus and transmission continues to evolve, so will this plan.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Overview	Substantial spread of the disease as evidenced by hospital admissions due to COVID-19.	A steady and consistent decrease in hospital admissions due to COVID-19.	A prolonged steady and consistent decrease in hospital admissions due to COVID-19.
Individual Protection	All High Risk individuals are encouraged to shelter in place.	All High Risk individuals are encouraged to shelter in place.	All High Risk individuals should consider sheltering in place. All individuals continue social distancing.
Worship	Online services only	Online services only	In-Person worship services limited to 25% capacity allowing social distancing. Masks must be worn. Worship will be recorded and continue to be available online.
Narthex	No gathering in the Narthex	No gathering in the Narthex	No gathering in the Narthex. No food or drink served.
Life Rituals (Weddings, Funerals)	Less than 10 people in attendance	Limited to approximately 25 people, and limited to family	In church services limited to 25% capacity allowing social distancing. Masks to be worn.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Church Business Meetings	Online meetings preferred. When not feasible, no more than 10 persons	Online meetings preferred. When not feasible, recommend no more than 10 persons	Meetings may resume at Good Shepherd, with 6 feet of social distancing and masks. Online meetings are still preferred
Fellowship and Adult Bible Study	Online only; Groups of 10 or less may meet outdoors with social distancing of at least 6 feet and masks	Online only.	Groups may resume at Good Shepherd, with 6 feet of social distancing and masks. Online meetings are still preferred
Youth Groups and Gathering	All Youth services and gatherings are suspended; this includes Sunday School.	All Youth services and gatherings are suspended; this includes Sunday School.	Youth activities may resume with a clear & church council approved plan to ensure social distancing and safety (hand washing, masks, cleaning, etc.).
Staff and Office Hours	Staff will work remotely as much as possible. Essential office tasks can be done with staggering and social distancing. Office open essential only M-F, 9-12	Staff will work remotely as much as possible. Essential office tasks can be done with social distancing. Office open essential only M-F, 9-12	Some staff may continue to work remotely when feasible. Normal office functions can happen, practicing safe social distancing.

Outdoor Gatherings: During Phase 2 and 3, outdoor gatherings will be allowed provided appropriate social distancing can be maintained. It is required that masks be worn while gathering for an event (e.g., bible study, FLY gathering, etc.) and when leaving an event to ensure proper social distancing.

Guiding Documents & Resources:

- [Guidelines for Opening up America Again](#)
- [CDC high risk information](#)
- [Central States Synod Health Plan](#)
- [CDC Masking Recommendations](#)
- [St. Louis Metropolitan Pandemic Task Force](#)
- [St. Louis County](#)