

May 19, 2021

Friends and family of St. Mark,



The Covid Response Team met the past week to discuss Governor Walz's actions to begin lowering restrictions.

We want to thank everyone for following the terms and conditions of phase 3.

After much discussion with the Covid Team and Council, we are moving forward to phase 3.5 beginning Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>. YAY!

What does this mean?

### **Masks**

- We are asking that those who worship with us in person, continue to mask and observe social distancing. We are making this request for three reasons:
  - We do not want to (and we are actually not able to), distinguish between those who have been vaccinated and those who have not. If everyone wears a mask, there is no finger pointing or wondering.
  - There are those among us who are vulnerable. We can best protect them by wearing masks. It's our responsibility to love our neighbors.
  - We have young members of our congregation. If parents who worship online see that some are wearing masks and some are not, they may conclude that it is not yet safe to bring their unvaccinated children to in person worship.
- Are there "holes" in each of the bullet points above? Absolutely! We are still navigating uncharted territory where there is no indisputably "correct" way of doing things.
- We live on a spectrum and need to respect all opinions.

### **Worship**

- Worship will be held online and in-person with proper mask wearing, and social distancing measures implemented per local guidance, still at a limited capacity but increasing to 50% (142) capacity.
- Starting May 30<sup>th</sup> (Memorial Weekend) we will be moving to one service at 9:30am.
- We ask that families sit 1-2 chairs apart from one another to honor social distancing.
- We will now take communion together in worship. As you enter the sanctuary, please take a prefilled communion cup to your seat. When instructed you will be able to eat and drink the elements from your seat. Baskets will be in each row to throw your cup away.
- Music will still be offered in worship, and we invite you to sing along as you feel comfortable (we ask you keep your mask on).
- We will use no-touch alternatives for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Single use bulletins will be provided with all worship materials.

### **Reservations**

- Online reservations will **NO** longer be required for Sunday morning worship beginning May 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- We will however ask you to sign in when you come into the building, so we can still do contact tracing if needed.
- If you do become exposed to covid or develop symptoms, please call the church immediately so we can follow through with the CDC protocols.

### **Fellowship Hour**

- We invite you to fellowship hour beginning May 23<sup>rd</sup> in the fellowship hall. Please feel free to grab your treats and coffee and head outside if it's beautiful out.
- Similar to restaurants, you can take your masks off when seated.
- We will be looking for members to help host fellowship hour now that we are able to gather again. Please consider signing up to help with coffee and asking others to coordinate bringing treats each week.

### **Online services**

- We are still waiting for the ability to livestream our services at a higher quality.
- Until we are able to livestream at that quality, our first service will be live on Facebook and then uploaded to our YouTube page by noon each Sunday. You can find this link on our website and Facebook page. (Starting May 30<sup>th</sup>, worship will be at 9:30am)

### **Activities on-site**

- St. Mark staff will continue with the office hours of Monday through Wednesday from 10am-3pm.
- We are working on summer events for St. Mark which you will find in the summer Markings at the beginning of June! Get excited!
- St. Mark and Community groups will no longer have a limited capacity of people. However, we still ask that the contact tracing paperwork be filled out for each meeting. Approval is required. See church website for more details.

We thank you again for your continued patience as we start this next phase. Please ask questions if you have them. Ask for clarification if you need it. Email or call if you think we are off base. But also, please understand that we are simply doing our best to keep everyone safe, and as things develop and change we will do what we can to keep you informed.

Make Good Choices,

St. Mark Council and Covid Response Team