



Connecting People to **Jesus**

IN-PERSON WORSHIP GUIDELINES **Sunday, May 10th, 2020**

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

This coming Sunday, May 10th, St. Mark Lutheran Church will resume holding in-person worship services.

While we rejoice in the ability to again enjoy the fellowship of believers in God's house, we do so keeping the physical safety and well-being of our members and guests a top priority along with the health and well-being of our faith and spiritual life in Christ.

Please carefully read all information below to ensure you are informed of all processes, procedures, and precautions we have put in place in order to ensure as safe of an environment as possible for all in attendance.

Service Time – Sunday, May 10th, 2020

10:30am – Online & In-Person Worship

To begin with, on Sunday, May 10th, we will have one (1) single service at 10:30am. This is the same single-service time we have been holding for our online only worship services since the social-distancing guidelines were issued here in Omaha and Nebraska.

In response to the survey we recently sent out (<https://stmarkomaha.org/the-spirit-april-29-2020/#survey>), we have decided that we will need no more than one (1) service to safely accommodate the number of people that we anticipate having in our sanctuary. We have calculated and arrived at a single service offering using a 33% "buffer" for unforeseen attendance and overflow. We are confident we will be able to easily adhere not only to the CDC and Nebraska guidelines for social distancing and best practices for church and worship services, but also be able to manage and continue our own extensive sanitization and safety measures we have been exercising throughout this pandemic.

If you have not filled out the May 10th worship service survey, please do so ASAP. Even if you do not plan on participating in worship in person, it still helps us immensely in our preparations to know this. Take the survey now, here: <https://stmarkomaha.org/the-spirit-april-29-2020/#survey>

The situations surrounding this pandemic are fluid and ever-changing. For this reason, we will be carefully assessing the circumstances after Sunday, May 10th, and will make a separate determination at that point as to how we will continue to proceed with, discontinue, or modify our in-person worship procedures moving forward.

Continuing Surveys

Your continued participation in weekly surveys will provide us with the information we need to make the best decisions. Please stay connected with all St. Mark communications and please be intentional in providing us the information we need to serve you best.

Safety Procedures

How we are keeping you safe in attendance.

In accordance with the state of Nebraska Government Guidelines, here are the steps we are taking to ensure health and safety for in-person worship. Find the state issued document here: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Documents/COVID-19-Guidelines-for-the-Conduct-of-Faith-Based-Services.pdf>

We encourage you to stay home and continue online worship through our [Live Stream](#) if:

- **You are sick or show even mild symptoms of being sick, in any way.** This includes but is not limited to:
 - Elevated temperature
 - Runny nose
 - Abnormal coughing/sneezing
 - Sore throat
 - Headache
 - Stomachache
 - Body aches
 - Nausea
 - Any symptoms of any kind that may indicate the possibility of any illness.
- You are “elderly”. We suggest using 70 years or older as a guideline, while taking into consideration the additional, following conditions.
- People with underlying medical conditions
- Family members who live with elderly people or those who are at risk
- People who have access to those at risk in nursing institutions
- People who have upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms
- People who live with someone with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms
- People with COVID-19 or live with someone with COVID-19
- People who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19

Personal Protective Measures

What you can and need to do to keep yourself and others safe:

- **Masks:** Though we are not requiring it, we encourage you to wear a mask if you desire and are comfortable doing so. Please ensure you know how to properly handle the mask when taking it on and off if you intend to participate in communion during service. [Click here for instructions from the World Health Organization.](#)
- **Temperature:** We will not be taking temperatures of individuals prior to letting them into the building. In addition to the Nebraska State guidelines not including this in their recommendations, there are a number of other reasons we are refraining from this practice. We do encourage each individual to take their own temperature before coming to worship.

- **Washing and Sterilizing of Hands:** Please execute responsible personal hygiene, including a thorough washing of hands, prior to coming to church. We encourage you to wash your hands again upon arrival. Our bathrooms are sanitized and bleached daily, including the night before and morning of service. Hand sanitizer will be available and you are encouraged to apply sanitizer upon entering the sanctuary.
- **Social Distancing:** Though we will have indications as to where you can and cannot sit marked off in the pews, you will need to ensure your own personal social distancing from others when entering and moving throughout the building. Please keep 6 feet between yourself and anyone that is not a part of your immediate family or household.

St. Mark Facility Protective Measures

What we are doing to ensure clean and safe facilities:

- Our entire facility is sterilized with a 50/50 bleach solution. This includes all touchable surfaces such as handles, door knobs and bars, drinking fountains, etc.
- Our janitorial staff has been re-doubling efforts to keep all bathrooms especially clean and sanitized.
- All furniture and surfaces in our Gathering Space and in the Sanctuary are cleaned and sanitized daily, and before and after activities/services.
- The 10-person limit on gatherings has been adhered to faithfully, and continues to be.
- Only people and professionals that *have to be* in our facility and that are essential staff have been in our facility. All others have not been permitted to enter.

In-Person Worship Specific Protective Measures

What will happen on Sunday specifically to ensure safety:

- **The entire Sanctuary, all surfaces and the upstairs bathrooms will be re-sanitized immediately prior to service.**
- **Parking will be limited** to the top/north lot along Parker St. The entrance to the south parking lot along Decatur St. will be closed. This is to ensure only one entrance for more effective management.
- **Entrance to the building** will be limited and restricted to the east doors; the main entrance closest to Parker St.
- **Handicap Access** is available at the main/east entrance.
- **All doors into and out of the main building and sanctuary will remain open** (and monitored) for entrance and exit, or will be opened by a single, designated individual to allow worshipping members and guests to come and go without having to touch doors/handles.
- **Seating Arrangements** have been made to ensure 6 feet in every direction between family units (households). Adjustments will have to undoubtedly be made to accommodate this in real time, so we ask that you show up at least 15 minutes early to service to allow our staff to ensure proper seating. You will be seated by an usher/elder, not seating yourself, in order to ensure proper social distancing guidelines are kept.
- **Sunday School, the Nursery, and Childcare will NOT be available.** Any children of any age must be with and remain with their parents and immediate family/household for the duration of the service.

- **All Bibles, hymnals, paper products, pens, etc.** will be removed from the sanctuary to ensure no items can be passed between or shared by individuals not a part of the same household. You may, of course, bring your own Bible and hymnal and are encouraged to do so!
- **Offerings will be received** in a single plate just outside the main entrance to the sanctuary. Please place the offering into the plate without touching the plate.
- **Communion will be offered and served by the Pastor only.** Of course, the Pastor will have thoroughly washed his hands prior to service and will sanitize immediately before handling the elements of the altar.
 - o **Lines will not be permitted to be formed,** and the Pastor will dismiss individuals and households one at a time to ensure enough space for social distancing at the altar.
 - o **Communion railings** have been removed to reduce the amount of surfaces being touched and possibly shared.
- **Dismissal from service** will be systematic and managed by our ushers/elders. This ensures proper social distancing is kept. We encourage you to keep 6 ft of distance between yourself and any party while socializing with those not in your immediate family or household.

Patience and Faith

The Lord still reigns and will forever reign on high!

This is unfamiliar territory for all of us. Your patience, prayers, support, encouragement and most of all, **faith in God above all**, are what we need to not only get through this, but even grow in faith and fellowship during this time. Even if you do not plan on attending, keep safe and healthy, and please pray the Lord's blessings on our efforts to faithfully proclaim the Gospel and keep His house a house of worship in all circumstances.

Please also say a prayer for and give thanks for the incredible staff we have here at St. Mark and the many volunteers who no doubt have been essential in bringing our worship into your homes over live-stream. Our spiritual health and well-being and connectedness to the church is just as important as our physical health, and there are many who have sacrificed much to ensure your church remains strong and faithful in her mission during these difficult times. Pray for them, please.

Whether it be in-person or online, I look forward to worshipping our great and gracious Lord Jesus with you this coming Sunday. The peace of Christ and the hope of His victory over sin, death, and the devil be yours eternally.

Your Servant in Christ,



Pastor Jay

Rev. Eric L. Jay