

Congregational Letter: Resumption of In-Person Worship - Faith Lutheran Church

September 29th, 2020

Dear People of Faith,

I pray that you and your families continue to be safe and healthy during this on-going global pandemic.

As you may remember from the letter sent to you by our Church Council on June 10th, 2020, we were asked by our Bishop and the Eastern Synod Council to suspend all in-person gatherings and in-person pastoral visitation until at least September 1st 2020.

With that date now behind us, Church Council has begun planning for a resumption of in-person worship and public gatherings at Faith Lutheran Church. The precautions, planning, and communication required to maximize the safety of both worshippers and our worship leaders is extensive. Our goal for a return to indoor in-person worship at Faith Lutheran Church is Sunday January 17th, 2021.

A firm date for our return to in-person worship will be contingent upon our ability as a congregation to put all regional, provincial, and Eastern Synod guidelines in place, and to communicate these measures to our congregational members prior to their return. Therefore, we ask that you be watchful for additional updates and instructional communications being sent to you on behalf of our church in the months ahead.

As we begin our transition back to in-person worship, here are some of the changes you can expect:

- **Oct. 1st - Faith Message** - A continuation of our weekly 'Faith Message' online worship services, including a special Christmas Pageant Service, and a special Christmas Eve Worship Service. We will continue our shared ministry with St. James Lutheran Church in Williamsford once a month.
- **Oct. 1st - Pastoral Visitation** - For the safety of all and to reduce the risk of the Pastor potentially carrying infection from house to house, in-home visitation will continue to be suspended except under the most urgent circumstances.
- **Oct. 5th - Parking Lot Food Drive** – In keeping with our active ministry of feeding those most at need in our local community, we will be holding a *Drive Through - Thanksgiving Food Drive at Faith Lutheran Church from 9 am until 12 pm.* For details and a list of much needed items, please see our attached Food Drive information sheet or visit our website <https://www.faithportelgin.com/upcoming-events>.

- **Oct. 9th** - Due date to notify us at monika@spaetzel.com of your interest in participating in our Christmas Pageant Video Service. For details please see our attached Christmas Pageant information sheet or visit our website <https://www.faithportelgin.com/upcoming-events>.
- **Oct. 18th - Outdoor Worship and Communion Service** – Weather permitting we will be holding an *open-air worship and communion service on the back lawn of Faith Lutheran Church at 11:30am*. Chairs will be provided, but we ask that you bring and wear your own face mask. For those who are able, we ask that you park on the street to allow greater pedestrian movement through our parking lot area. In the event of rain, the service will be moved forward to the following Sunday. For details and updates please check our visit our website <https://www.faithportelgin.com/upcoming-events>.
- **Dec. 21st** - Release of our Faith Lutheran Christmas Pageant Video at <https://www.faithportelgin.com/programs>.
- **Dec. 24th** - Release of our Faith Lutheran Christmas Eve Worship Service Video at <https://www.faithportelgin.com/programs>.
- **Jan 17th** - Tentative resumption of in-person worship (Amber Stage) at Faith Lutheran Church. Amber Stage includes the following precautions for all participants:
 - 1) *Self-screening for any signs and symptoms prior to arrival.*
 - 2) *Attendance taken on arrival for the purpose of public health contact tracing.*
 - 3) *The wearing of face masks at all times when in the building, and outside the building when a social distance of 2 meters cannot be ensured.*
 - 4) *Social distancing of 2 meters and the wearing of mask at all times inside the building. Our ushers will be able to assist with seating up to 50 people in our sanctuary and fellowship hall.*
 - 5) *Services will be reduced to approximately 30 minutes to reduce the risk of exposure.*
 - 6) *No congregational singing.*
 - 7) *Communion will be served using bread only.*
 - 8) *There will be no food or drink fellowship after the service.*

Our primary concern and responsibility is to care for one another, and to do our part to reduce the risk of viral transmission in our community. We will of course continue to monitor the situation in our region and the recommendations of our Medical Officer of Health.

It has been encouraging for me to hear from so many people how you have found new and creative ways to maintain your spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, study, and service to those in need. I thank you for the remarkable efforts you have made to support one another over the past several months.

Thank you for your ongoing grace and patience as we all do our best to try and navigate a way forward. Please continue to pray for your Church Council, your Pastor, and for one another.

Your co-worker in Christ,

Pastor Jason D. Ashby
Faith Lutheran Church