



Holy Cross Lutheran Church

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

More than a year ago, the world and the ways in which we interact in it were drastically altered. Many tough decisions have led to big changes, both to the manner in which we come together and to the precautions put in place to hopefully protect those we love and care for. We, the Board of Elders, offer you our heartfelt thanks for the patience, support, feedback, and love you have all shown to the church leadership and to each other throughout these trying times. Please continue to keep us and the Church in your prayers as we move forward to the next phase of our lives together.

Each Board at Holy Cross is tasked with creating goals; these goals are to guide and inform us as we strive to adhere to the Mission of the Church. Goal number one for the Board of Elders states: "Offer worship opportunities that are safe, open to all, and do not trivialize liturgical practices." It has always been the aim of the Elders to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider the method and means of worship practices at Holy Cross. In light of the challenges presented throughout this pandemic, we have become even more keenly aware of the impact our decisions have on our beloved congregation. Since the beginning of this life altering crisis, the leadership groups of Holy Cross have worked carefully to do the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. It was with this goal in mind that the decisions to shut down and then reopen the church with precautions were made last spring. It is also with this goal in mind that we are taking steps to fully reopen our church.

The Board of Elders and others in leadership positions have kept a close eye on statistics from the CDC, as well as information from the St. Charles County Department of Public Health. The data and information reported over recent months have given us hope in looking toward the inevitable end of this pandemic. Some of the most applicable information follows:

- ◆ Concerns of transmission from surfaces has been alleviated as understanding of the virus has become more accurate.
- ◆ The number of new cases and deaths has dramatically decreased. There have been no reported deaths since February; Praise the Lord!
- ◆ Vaccinations have become open to all. As of May 3, roughly 30% of the county is fully vaccinated; 60% of those at higher risk have been fully vaccinated.

It is with this information in hand that we have begun the process of fully reopening Holy Cross. These measures will be taken in phases. Our aim is to offer opportunities to all of our members across the spectrum of comfort and confidence, while bringing us back to the fellowship we all cherish at Holy Cross. You have undoubtedly noticed some of the changes that were implemented in our first phase. These include: removing most of the seating restrictions, returning the Bibles and hymnals to the pews, and having coffee and donuts in the Welcome Center.

The next phase of our return to "normal" will be more involved. The following standards are meant to be implemented on June 1:

Saturday Service:

The 2PM service will be eliminated.

Masks will still be mandated for all worshippers at the 5PM service.

Socially distanced pews will still be available at the back of the sanctuary.

Sunday Services:

Masks are not required.

The Passing of the Peace will return at the beginning of service.

Seating will be fully open.

Communion will return to the rail.

The Common Cup will be offered during Communion.

These changes are meant to allow our members to worship in the ways that best suit their levels of comfort. Each member and family should feel encouraged to participate in as many or as few of these changes as they desire. Please prayerfully consider these changes and the effect they will have on your worship experience as well as the experience of those around you. We ask that you continue to lovingly respect and care for your brothers and sisters that may not share your level of comfort.

The final phase of our full reopening is planned to occur in late summer or early fall. The Board of Elders, Church Council, and pastors will continue to monitor the developments of this pandemic and make future decisions based on current data and information. Please speak with your assigned elder, any member the Board of Elders, or a pastor regarding any questions or concerns you may have as we move through these unprecedented events. We are always happy to lend a compassionate and thoughtful ear.

Through the love of our Father, the salvation from our Savior, and our hope found in the Spirit, we will continue to move forward together.

In Christ,

The Board of Elders