

Frequently Asked Questions About Returning to Worship in Person

Trinity Lutheran Church, Waupaca

Questions About In-Person Worship at Trinity

When did services resume in person? Our first in-person worship service was Sunday, July 19, 2020.

What time is the service held? Services are at 9 a.m. on Sundays and for the immediate future are expected to be shorter than past services, around 45 minutes.

How many people are able to attend? Right now, our sanctuary can safely accommodate 100 people while maintaining social distancing of 6 feet.

Do I have to wear a mask? Yes. All those age 2 and older who attend worship in person need to wear masks at this time. We understand that this may be an inconvenience for some, but it is essential in order to keep one another safe.

What if I don't have a mask or forget to bring one? Cloth and disposable masks will be provided at the main entrance.

Are reservations required? Yes. With limited capacity, we want to make sure people who plan to attend in-person worship services will have a place to sit safely.

How do I make a reservation? Reservations can be made online at trinitywaupaca.eventbrite.com or by calling the church office at (715) 258-7688.

What if more people want to attend in-person worship than we can safely hold in our sanctuary? We will offer a second weekly service at a different time.

Can I still participate in worship online? Yes. Visit Trinity's Facebook page shortly before 9 a.m. on Sundays to join the service as it happens. Even if you are not a Facebook user, you will be able to "attend" services remotely at www.facebook.com/trinitywaupaca.

Can I still listen to services on the radio? Yes. Tune into Lakes 92.7 FM (WDUX) on Sundays at 10 a.m. for the broadcast.

What if I am especially vulnerable to the coronavirus? For many people, especially those who are [at increased risk due to age or health conditions](#), we *encourage* attending worship online or over the radio rather than attending in person, just as we *urge* those who are not feeling well on a given Sunday not to attend. We fully understand that many members will choose to attend worship remotely.

How will distancing be maintained? We will take many steps to promote physical distancing of 6 feet throughout the service, including:

- Outside the entrance and on the floor, from the entrance to the sanctuary and from the sanctuary to the restrooms, there will be markings every 6 feet to remind people to maintain a safe distance.
- Inside the sanctuary, alternating pews will be marked with dots every 6 feet to help people maintain a safe distance throughout the service.
- Ushers will help guide traffic flow into the building and will help seat people safely in the sanctuary.

- At the end of the service, ushers will direct people to leave from the back of the sanctuary first.

Will I be able to sit with my family? Couples and families living in the same household will be allowed to sit together without needing to maintain distance before and after worship. Family members who live in separate households but who are already in close contact with each other may also sit together if they arrive for worship at the same time.

Can I sit with friends or family members who don't live with me? Not generally. There would be an exception for those who carpool together (thus already in close contact) and arrive for worship at the same time.

Are children welcome? Yes, but keep in mind that the nursery will be closed.

Is child care provided? Not at this time.

Will communion be served? Yes. We will continue the new practice we've begun with our online services. On the first Sunday of each month, those attending in person will pick up prepackaged wafer/juice cups before entering the sanctuary. After consecration, they will receive the elements in their pews or share with members of their household seated with them, in the same manner as those participating at home via live-stream or radio.

Will we be able to sing? Not at this time. Due to increased risk of infection posed by singing, even while wearing masks, **only vocalists singing solos or duets will be able to sing**; those worshipping in person will be invited to meditate on the words on the screen as worship leaders sing them.

Will we be able to speak prayers together? Yes, we will have unison prayer. Mask-wearing and social distancing will provide sufficient protection from the aerosolized spread of the virus that otherwise comes with speaking.

Will we share the peace? No. This would not allow us to maintain physical distancing, and shaking hands as done in the past is not a safe practice at this time.

Will we pass offering plates? No. Passing plates would result in potential contamination. Offering boxes will be placed in the Koinonia Room outside the sanctuary. Members may also still deposit offerings in the open, entry-level area outside the church offices from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Thursday or give online by clicking [here](#).

Will we have coffee after the service? Not at this time. It will be too difficult to maintain physical distancing if we resume this tradition of fellowship time now, and sharing food or beverages is still unwise. We will encourage members to greet each other (from a safe distance) in the parking lot after the service concludes.

Will the pastors greet people before or after the service? No. For the safety of our pastors and those in attendance, pastors cannot yet make themselves available for personal greetings.

Will the pastors and musicians be masked? Pastors and musicians will lead worship without masks but will keep additional distance from one another and from the congregation.

Questions About Keeping Each Other Safe

Will people be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before attending? We will not formally screen people entering the church for worship (e.g., with temperature checks or symptom questionnaires). However, we will alert people to the symptoms of COVID-19 in communications, through the reservation process, and with signage at the entrance of the church. Those experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked not to attend worship in person.

How do I know if I may have COVID-19? What are the symptoms? According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported—ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea.

What if someone who has COVID-19 attends in-person worship? Trinity is implementing a comprehensive covenant approach to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Surface disinfecting, hand-sanitizing, physical distancing, and mask-wearing all work together so that we can keep each other safe.

Why are masks being required of everyone age 2 and older? The [CDC](#) recommends that everyone age 2 and older wear face coverings to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Masks offer the wearer some protection, but their primary function is to prevent people with COVID-19 from spreading it when they breathe, talk, cough, or sneeze. It is important to note that people can have COVID-19 and not know it because they don't have any symptoms. This is why it is important for everyone to wear a mask.

We're already distancing ourselves; do we really need masks, too? Per the CDC: "It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-foot social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. CDC is additionally advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others." While we will maintain distance, we will also be together indoors for close to an hour. Under these conditions, the added protection of face masks is prudent to protect the health of those attending in-person services.

Do children need to wear a mask? Children 2 and older are expected to wear a mask.

Is hand sanitizer be available? Yes. You will find hand sanitizer at key locations (e.g., at the top and bottom of the stairs and elevator) as well as in each available pew.

How can I help keep people in my home safe when I return from church? When you return home—especially if people in your household are vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19 – put your mask in the laundry, and wash your hands before touching household objects or people. You may also want to disinfect things you touch between church and home, like car keys, touched surfaces of your car and the doorknob to your home.

Will the church disinfect surfaces before the service? Yes. A cleaning protocol makes sure all touched surfaces from the front door to bathroom fixtures to pews are disinfected prior to church services.

What if someone starts to cough or sneeze during the service? We are aware that if someone begins to cough or sneeze repeatedly during the service that others will be concerned for their safety. People will be reminded to exit the sanctuary if they repeatedly cough or sneeze, and ushers will provide support and options for those with such symptoms in a designated area.

Questions About Trinity's Decision to Offer In-Person Worship Services

How was the decision made to resume in-person worship? Understanding a strong desire by many to worship in person once again, the Church Council in May asked the Health Committee to develop recommendations regarding whether and how Trinity could safely offer an in-person worship option. Here's an overview of the process from there:

- A subgroup of the Health Committee worked from late May into June developing recommendations based on guidance from the CDC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- From June 15 through June 22, Trinity members were invited to complete a survey regarding their intentions to attend worship. More than 360 people responded. Survey findings helped to refine the committee's recommendations.
- On Saturday, June 13, members of the Health Committee, Pastor Andy Behrendt, and several Trinity staff members performed a walk-through at the church to envision how the policy recommendations would be implemented from building entry through the service and departure.
- Based on the walk-through, the Health Committee developed an implementation checklist to guide prevention practices for in-person worship.
- The recommendations were presented to the Church Council on June 23, and were largely adopted with some minor changes.

Who served on the Health Committee subgroup? Dr. Paul Sletten, M.D.; Peggy Strey; Laura Reynolds; and Chuck Reynolds worked closely with Pastor Andy through the process.

What is basis of the Health Committee's recommendations? The Health Committee's recommendations for safely gathering for in-person worship are based mainly on the CDC's guidance for [Community and Faith-Based Organizations](#). Guidance from the ELCA and Wisconsin Council of Churches also informed decisions on specific issues.

Why are we holding the service at 9 a.m.? Based on responses to the member survey, 9 a.m. was the most popular time. Also, the 9 a.m. start time will give our volunteers more time to prepare to welcome those attending the service safely.

Under what circumstances might Trinity decide to stop offering in-person services again? We will stop offering in-person worship if Waupaca County or Wisconsin health officials issue new orders or guidance to restrict large gatherings. In lieu of such guidance, we may also decide to stop in-person worship services if local trends in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, or deaths indicate that we need to rethink our approach. Church leaders will address the situation weekly.

Why don't we just hold services in our parking lot? We have considered this option and have discussed it internally and with local officials. Key issues include parking, available space, weather, setup (e.g., sound system), the impact on neighbors, and difficulty maintaining physical distance as people walk to/from their cars parked on streets around our church.

Why not hold services at a park or other outdoor location? As with the parking-lot option, this was considered, with many of the same issues needing to be addressed.

Are baptisms, weddings, and funerals taking place at Trinity? Yes, with many of the same safety measures that we will have in place for in-person worship.

Are meetings taking place in the church building? Not at this time. Committees and other groups are encouraged to continue with online meetings or to meet in person outdoors with physical distancing. We will re-evaluate this in mid-August.

Will other outside groups be able to use our facilities? Not at this time. Use of our facilities by outside groups will be reconsidered over time as conditions improve.

How long will this go on? We don't know for sure. Consensus among public-health experts is that things will not begin to return to normal until an effective vaccine is widely available and used.

Other Questions

Is the church office open? Not at this time, when pastors and staff are onsite as needed and working remotely when possible. The entry-level area outside the office continues to be open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. For safety reasons, staff members and pastors are rotating between at-home and in-office work, so, if you need to contact someone in particular, call the office at (715) 258-7688 or send a message to trinity@tlcwaupaca.org.

Can I see the Health Committee's recommendations and survey report? Yes. [Please click here for the approved recommendations.](#) [Click here for the survey results.](#)

Whom can I contact with questions or concerns? Alicia Dorsett, our church administrator, is the person you should contact with questions or concerns about the church's COVID-19 response. You can reach Alicia by calling (715) 258-7688 or by email at adorsett@tlcwaupaca.org.