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“May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5-6)

Dear Trinity community,

It’s been too long since we’ve been together. But I’m glad to announce that, after an incredible amount of work by our Health Committee and church staff, as well careful consideration by our Church Council, **Trinity will reopen its doors for in-person worship in mid-July.**

It’s good news for many of you. More than 50 of the 360-plus survey responses we recently received from our members identified simply wanting to be together as what you are looking forward to most when it comes to returning to worship. We as church leaders absolutely understand that, and it’s this understanding that has motivated us to make these long-awaited steps. You’ll be able to come together **beginning Sunday, July 19**, and we’ll acknowledge upfront that some of you might not be happy with how that return will work. But all of us who have poured our hearts into this planning understand that keeping people healthy is more important than making them happy. With that, we ask for your understanding and grace.

With safety and Christian love for our neighbor as our priorities, in-person worship will be different from the way it was before mid-March. And it won’t be for everyone. Those at risk because of age or health concerns that make them vulnerable to the coronavirus are urged to continue to worship remotely. **Our worship broadcasts on Facebook (moving to 9 a.m. beginning Sunday, July 5) and on the radio (still at 10 a.m. on WDUX-FM 92.7) will be the better option for those at-risk members**, as well as the only option for those who are not feeling well on a given weekend. We fully understand that many of you will choose to keep worshipping remotely.

For those of you healthy enough and willing to abide by the covenant of the precautions and other practices listed below, this is how in-person worship will work beginning July 19, at least for the time being, subject to change based on the number of COVID-19 cases in our county:

- We plan to have **one in-person worship service on Sundays at 9 a.m.**, which will also be live-streamed on Facebook and recorded for Lakes 92.7. A reservation system, which will be announced soon, will allow participants to register in advance online or by phone. If the number of people who sign up exceeds the distanced **seating for 100 people** that the sanctuary provides, we will look to add a second weekly service.
- **Members of the same household may sit together.** Those attending will otherwise be distanced in designated pews and seated from front to back as they enter without being able to sit in preferred pews from the past. **We ask that people come early** enough not to create a “traffic jam” shortly before worship begins.
- Worshipers will remain in the pews throughout the service unless they need to stop in designated restrooms; a place will also be provided for anyone who begins to feel ill. **The nursery will not be open.**

- **All people age 2 and older who attend worship will be required to wear masks, which will be provided for those who don't come with their own.** We realize that this is an inconvenience for some, but it is essential in keeping one another safe.
- 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 as worship leaders sing them. Worshipers can follow along on the screens, but bulletins and hymnals won't be provided.
- Pastors and musicians will lead worship without masks but will keep additional distance from one another and from the congregation. Pastors will be unable to greet those attending before or after worship.
- **There will be no sharing of the peace, shaking of hands, hugging, or other contact, nor will there be fellowship time or shared food.**
- Offerings will be received in boxes outside the sanctuary doors.
- **Holy Communion will continue 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.
- Baptisms as well as funerals and weddings held at Trinity during this time will generally be subject to these same precautions.

By no means is this the way we envisioned our long-awaited return to worship. But, based on guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, this is for now the only way we feel we can safely gather. While some members indicated in the recent survey that they will not come to worship if they must wear a mask, many more of you indicated precautions like these need to be in place for you to consider attending. We must make this covenant together if we can return to worship together.

Your partnership is crucial when it comes to your participation within the walls of our church building, just as we thank you and thank God for the many ways you have continued to do Jesus' work as the church "inside out." **Ushers and greeters younger than 60 are needed to facilitate worship in this new way.** If you are willing to help, please contact Trinity Volunteer Coordinator Tammy Wright at twright@tlcwaupaca.org, or call the church office at (715) 258-7688. You can also contact us with questions. Know that much more communication will follow in coming weeks.

The office will remain closed for now as staff continues working remotely when possible, but the entry-level area outside the church office will still be open Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Ministry groups and committees will continue to meet electronically or begin to gather in outdoor spaces until at least mid-August.

As many of you have seen too clearly, the threat of COVID-19 remains real and relentless. But the love of God in Christ Jesus, in whom we find our hope, is so real and relentless, too. We hope, pray, and trust that our return to in-person worship will keep us safe and make the power of that love all the more apparent in this time when our world needs it more than ever.

In Christ, as always,



Pastor Andy Behrendt