

Cross of Christ's Re-Opening Plan

Dear friends,

This may not be a “one size fits all” process, but everyone stays safe. I know you miss the church building and all the ministry that happens within the walls. But don't mistake the building for God's presence. God cares more about your neighbor's well-being than your act of worship. It says so all over scripture.

Acts 17:24 - “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.”

God. Is. With. You. Always.

Cross of Christ's leadership has drafted a tentative plan to reopen our building and to prepare for when we can meet, talk and worship together again face-to-face. We are looking forward to the day when we are able to worship together again! We know that the church is built on relationships, centered on the grace and love of Jesus Christ.

At the same time, it is imperative that Cross of Christ has a plan to safely reopen, and to protect the safety of God's people.

The plan is in five stages. The criteria used to develop this plan include:

Fulfilling the mission to which God has called us, (*“to joyfully proclaim the gospel of Christ in word and deed; inviting people to worship together, nurturing them in the Christian faith, loving one another and serving the world in need.”*)

The safety and well-being of our congregation and community.

The desire of our congregation to be “together” again.

The stability and sustainability of the congregation

Data used in developing this reopening plan has come from the Governor's office, the Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC, the synod office and the ELCA, as well as best practices from other ELCA congregations.

Except for stage 1, we do not yet have specific dates or even triggers for each stage. The timing for shifts from stage to stage will be informed by limitations and dates set by the Governor, the State Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control. So this plan is subject to change.

We also recognize that stepping in to these stages might be a “back and forth” process.

Depending on recommendations, we may need to move backwards before moving forward again.

Stage 1

Effective June 1, 2020, the building of Cross of Christ will reopen with some restriction.

The Chase Street building only, The Stone Church will remain closed.
Church Office Administrator will work out of the main office as she has done since the building closed.

Other staff will be in the building only as needed and requested.

Volunteers for food ministry, Meet Up and Eat Up, will begin preparing and serving bag lunches to Houston children and youth beginning Monday, June 8. Bag lunches will be prepared and distributed with strict sanitary, hygiene, and social distancing protocols. Lunches can be picked up directly at the church east entrance from 11:15-11:45 am.

Use for certain areas can be secured by contacting the church office and at the discretion of Pastor Linda

Worship will continue via live-streaming online

Drive up Holy Communion distribution will be provided on Sunday, June 21, 11:15am – 12:15pm.

Prayer Meditation Hour in the sanctuary will be available each Wednesday afternoon, beginning June 3 at 4 pm. There will be restricted and limited seating. Come for unstructured personal time in the sanctuary space.

Members of our community are encouraged to continue personal preparedness, by washing hands, avoiding touching our faces, wearing face masks etc...

Physically vulnerable individuals are strongly encouraged to stay home

Staff will be expected to wear masks when interacting with others in close proximity

The staff and leadership will continue to consult with local medical experts as we move forward, and the staff and leadership will make the decision when to move to stage 2

Stage 2

Cross of Christ's building will reopen on a limited basis

Worship will continue via live-streaming online

Small group meetings allowed, up to Governor's limits on group sizes & social distancing

Members of our community are encouraged to continue personal preparedness, by washing hands, avoiding touching our faces, wearing face masks etc...

Physically vulnerable individuals are strongly encouraged to stay home

Staff will be expected to wear masks when interacting with others in close proximity (as per the Dept. of Health recommendations)

Areas and rooms used will be sanitized after use

Cross of Christ's staff and leadership will create a team to set expectations and process for Stage 3

We will continue to consult with local medical experts as we move forward

Congregational council and staff will make the decision when to move to stage 3

Stage 3

Face-to face worship resumes (within the limitations of group size & social distancing set by the Governor)

We will begin using only utilizing the Chase Street sanctuary. The Stone Church building will remain closed.

Pew seating will be restricted and limited to meet social distancing guidelines

Communion is served using strict safety protocols
Hymnals, Bibles, pew pads, pew cushions will be removed from Sanctuary.
We will refrain from congregational singing and in-person unison speaking as per current recommendations from MN Dept. of Health
We will receive our offering in plates set by the doors, to avoid passing the plates.
Children are welcome to worship with their families, however there will be no invitation for children to come forward during children's message.
Nursery care will not yet be available
Those who are physically vulnerable to the virus are asked to continue staying at home and worshipping online
Worship will continue via live-streaming online
Members of our community are encouraged to continue personal preparedness, by washing hands, avoiding touching our faces, wearing face masks etc...
Staff will be expected to wear masks when interacting with others in close proximity (as per the Dept. of Health recommendations)
Other large events in the building may resume (within the limitations of group size & social distancing set by the Governor)
Food service for these events will not be available yet
Weddings and funerals can resume (within the limitations of group size & social distancing set by the Governor)
Sunday school, Club 56, GXP, confirmation resume (within the limitations of group size & social distancing set by the Governor and Houston School District protocols)
The staff and leadership will create a team to set expectations and process for Stage 4
We will continue to consult with local medical experts as we move forward

Stage 4

Large events that include food service may resume
Wednesday night dinners may be served face-to-face
Sunday morning refreshments and coffee resume
Worship will continue via live-streaming online
The staff and leadership will create team to set expectations and process for Stage 5
We will continue to consult with local medical experts as we move forward
We will continue to seek input from other community organizations (Houston School District, other congregations, etc...)

Stage 5

Cross of Christ's programming will resume as normal
Worship will continue via live-streaming online
Nursery/childcare available during worship

We are excited to see everyone again. In the midst of this planning, however, we need to acknowledge that the world has changed, and that even when we are past this health crisis, our ministry will have moved into a new stage. And while this creates some uncertainty, and maybe even anxiety, we remain firm in our believe that "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Not life, nor death, nor angels, nor

rulers..." nor Covid-19, nor quarantine... "nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

We don't anticipate simply moving back to "what it was," rather we look forward to a new and stronger future.

Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your commitment to the wellbeing of others in the community, and thank you for being the church, wherever you are.

Thanks be to God!

Pastor Linda