

Greetings Dear Faith Lutheran Family,

It has been a strange and trying time as we navigate the waters of life with the challenges of COVID-19. We have seen the results around the world as we have been sheltered in place since roughly March 15th. As a church, we have worked hard to reach out to you and bring you Drive-In Worship with live-streaming of those services on YouTube, as well as devotional resources and information on our Facebook page and web page: [faithvalpo.org](http://faithvalpo.org). We pray that during this time you have felt cared for as a precious member of our congregation.

As you may already know, Governor Holcomb has laid out a plan for our state to open back up again. His full plan can be found at [backontrack.in.gov](http://backontrack.in.gov). His plan has specifically given houses of worship the freedom to open up starting the weekend of May 10th. There are also guidelines and recommendations to follow with this new freedom that need to be honored out of respect for our authorities and the safety of our neighbor. The Board of Directors, Pastor, and Becky have met - virtually- almost weekly to discuss the future plans for Faith, including its reopening. We have a unique blend of challenges with being a smaller and older congregation that must be considered. After much conversation and prayer we have decided the following:

- Faith will open the sanctuary for worship starting with the **June 14, 9:00am service**. This is the start of Indiana's Stage 4 of Back on Track.
- Worshipers will be asked to maintain the **six-foot social distancing** by spacing themselves out in the pews.
- If the sanctuary pews fill up, **overflow seating** will be available in the Narthex, Parlor/Cry Room, and downstairs.
- **We will continue to broadcast to the parking lot and Live-stream on YouTube** to accommodate those who might not feel comfortable gathering together or are enjoying worshipping at home. This also allows the service to be heard throughout the entire church for the overflow seating.
- After each service Loretta Frank will clean and sanitize the sanctuary and bathrooms.
- **All in-person activities** in the church facilities, outside of worship and VCA Daycare/Preschool, will be limited and approved on a case-by case basis, until the state reaches stage 5 in July. This includes facilities usage for members and non-members.
- **Small groups** are encouraged to meet virtually or off site with proper social distancing.

Since we are working to keep the building sanitized, we ask that you limit your access to the building. If you need to be in the church, we ask that you let Loretta Frank know, so that she can sanitize accordingly. Since we don't want to have her constantly cleaning, we ask that you not enter the building during the week unless absolutely necessary. This will help with the safety of our worshippers and staff.

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**Beginning June 14, here is a rough idea of how a typical Sunday would look:**

- We will prop the front and back doors (doors A & B) open for you to enter **Sunday Morning at 8:30am**.
- A masked, gloved usher will greet you, provide service bulletins, and show you where to sit to keep appropriate social distancing.
- If you arrive at church and we have reached our maximum occupancy, you will be asked to sit in the narthex, parlor/cry room, downstairs, or outside for worship.
- Our worship service will have **no handshake of peace or greeting**.
- **Communion** will be on the first, third, and fifth Sundays using careful safety practices. (Anyone wishing to remain in the parking lot during service and still receive communion should make arrangements with pastor in advance, so that we are aware of your desire).
- After the service, your pew will be dismissed by the usher. You are asked to leave without touching anything and maintaining social distancing.
- You are invited to drop your **offering** in the basket in the back of the sanctuary and come back for worship again next week.

**As we gather for worship, it is important to remember the following:**

- **Masks** are recommended but are not required
- **Please stay home if...** you feel sick, have been around people that have been sick within the last two weeks, or you or someone you live with has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 30 days.
- **If you are over 65, are at higher risk, or are hesitant to come to worship...** it is recommended that you consider enjoying the Drive-in radio broadcast in our parking lot (99.1fm) or the streaming services online, for your own safety.
- Since the VCA is still meeting during the week, **we should not enter the Preschool wing**.

We know that many of us have strong feelings about what we should be doing during this time. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding in all of this. Please know that these decisions have been made after much thoughtful discussion and prayer, and with careful consideration for our members, our neighbors, and the many ways in which God has called us to be faithful.

As we prepare to return to the sanctuary, we give thanks to God for the alternate ways he has provided us to Worship and maintain contact during this challenging time. We also give thanks that we can continue to offer these alternatives to those who need them going ahead. If you feel comfortable and well, then gather with us in person to worship, when you are ready. If not, we encourage you to take advantage of the alternatives provided. Go through the stages of Governor Holcomb's plan at your own pace and know that your church will be there for you.

There is a lot of information in this letter so please keep it as a reference. You are welcome to contact Pastor or the board with any further questions you may have as we continue through the stages. As more information develops we will continue to contact you to update you with our response as a church. We certainly look forward to the day when we can all be safely together again, in a more personal fashion. Until then remember: we are held in the hands of an incredible God who continues to care for us all. He loves you and so do we.