

Mt. Olive Lutheran Church and School CoViD-19 Update

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ at Mt. Olive,

I am sure that all of you are very aware that in Iowa, Polk County, and Des Moines the number of CoViD-19 cases has been soaring along with hospitalizations. Governor Kim Reynolds recently issued a new emergency proclamation mandating new levels of safety protocols, including the mandatory wearing of masks in many places inside and outside, in an effort to stem the tide of infections and to relieve the pressure on our medical centers. Perhaps you have been wondering how all of this is impacting the ministry at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church and School. If so, I want to bring you up to speed. Leadership on both the church and school sides of our faith community have been carefully monitoring what is happening in the community around us so that our congregational and school activities can be kept as safe as possible for all of those who are involved. Both the School Board and the Action Board have recently met to evaluate whether any changes in our CoViD protocols are warranted.

In the School the primary protocol change is a move to requiring “everyone to wear a mask everywhere all day long.” Previously, masks were required only in common areas and not in the classrooms. The primary reason for this change is that now if a teacher or student should be exposed to or contract CoViD-19, only that particular individual will need to isolate. Previously, an entire classroom or even a full wing of the school might have had to isolate. However, we give thanks to God that we have thus far made it healthfully through 50+ days of school without having to shutdown in anyway! The new mask protocol will help us increase that record.

On the Church side NONE of our existing CoViD-19 safety protocols need to be changed. What we have been doing since we resumed in-person worship on July 19th is in FULL compliance with Governor Reynolds’ most recent proclamation. On behalf of Mt. Olive’s leadership I want to thank all of you – and also thank God for you – for taking our safety measures seriously and complying with them without objection. Those again in brief are when entering or while inside the building: wearing a mask (other than when receiving the Lord’s Supper), washing or sanitizing your hands as you enter, and maintaining the social distance of 6’ from other people who do not live in your house.

There has been one recent change in Church activities, not because of a government proclamation, but rather the desire of MtO members. Beginning the weekend of October 31 and November 1, we have fully returned to our pre-pandemic schedule for worship and for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Every weekend there is now BOTH a Saturday 5:00 pm and Sunday 9:00 am service. The celebration of the Sacrament is keyed to which Sunday of the month falls within the weekend. If it is a 1st or 3rd Sunday of the month, Communion will be celebrated in the Saturday service. If it is a 2nd or 4th Sunday of the month, Communion will be celebrated in the Sunday service. If it is a 5th Sunday of a month, like it will be at the end of this month, Communion will be celebrated in BOTH the Saturday and Sunday services.

At this point, unless you are a member of a “vulnerable” group due to age or underlying medical conditions, we would like to invite and encourage you to do two things:

First, when you leave your house for any reason, “religiously” follow the CDC safety protocols – wear a mask, frequently cleanse your hands, and maintain a 6’ distance from anyone not living in your house. This will help reduce the spread of CoViD-19, keeping you and everyone else safe.

Second, recognize that your “health” is not just a physical thing, but is also, and most importantly, a *spiritual* thing. Just as you need to feed, care for, and protect your *body* against harmful germs, so also you need to feed, care for, and protect your *soul* against Satan and his agents who are bent on your eternal destruction. To that end, please join us for in-person worship. We are doing it as safely as we can. Our attendance has been running in the low to mid-30’s on Saturdays and low to mid-20’s on Sundays. So we have ample socially distanced seating. But *more importantly*, You need the gifts that God is directly delivering there – forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, saving faith, and eternal life. You also need the support of sisters and brothers in Christ, and they need your support, as together you “*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God*” *Colossians 3:16*. We look forward to seeing you soon. *God is with us all!*

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Mark Kleckner