

July 9, 2020

Dear Beaver Lutheran Church,

I am excited to announce that beginning this Sunday, July 12th, we will offer worship both in-person and online at 10:15am. Council voted on June 10th to create a safety team whose responsibility it is to ensure a safe space for in-person worship. That team has been hard at work consulting and observing CDC, synod, and government recommendations, and we are ready to open our doors this Sunday.

Please read this letter carefully as it contains detailed instructions for worship.

Here's what you can expect if you choose to join us for in-person worship.

First and foremost, we are requiring everyone on church property to **wear a mask** and observe **social distancing**.

Wearing a mask is critical. Your mask protects your neighbor, and your neighbor's mask protects you. It only works if we *all* wear them. Jesus commands us to love our neighbors. I know that wearing a mask is uncomfortable—but we do it out of love for our neighbors. If you do not have a mask or forget it at home, we can provide you with one.

Note: children under the age of two and anyone who has trouble breathing should not wear a mask. However, if you are unable to wear a mask, we strongly recommend you stay home and join us for worship online.

As you enter the church on Sunday morning, ushers will greet you, direct you to grab a worship packet, and help you find a seat. Your worship packet will be a zip-lock bag containing an order of service, an announcement sheet, *Taking Faith Home*, and communion supplies.

To ensure proper social distancing, half of our pews have been blocked off. We ask that all individuals, couples, and family groups remain at least six feet away from each other while on the property.

Our in-person service will follow the same structure as our online services, with the addition of communion. The CDC recommends limiting the length of time we are gathered, and so we will do our best to keep the service at about 45 minutes.

Communion will be a little different than you are used to. Instead of coming forward to receive bread and wine, you will remain in your pew. Your worship packet will contain pre-packaged communion elements. We will all open our communion elements at the same time, and then eat the bread together and drink the grape juice together. You may remove your mask prior to consuming the elements and return it immediately after you have eaten.

Michelle will be present to lead us in instrumental music. At this time, the Synod strongly recommends that we refrain from singing, as it significantly increases the chances of spreading

the virus. However, while we will have no congregational singing, all are invited to pray and mediate as Michelle offers musical worship from the piano.

At the conclusion of the service, during the postlude, ushers will dismiss the congregation by row in order to promote social distancing. You are invited to process down the aisle. At the end of the aisle, there will be a basket into which you may deposit your monetary offering, should you desire to give one. There will also be a trashcan available for you to deposit your used communion supplies.

Once you have exited the narthex, we request that you proceed directly to your vehicle. Please refrain from prolonged conversations in the parking lot. We will continue to offer Wednesday Night Check-ins and Bible and Brew online for deeper fellowship with one another.

The hallway past the bathrooms will be closed off. We are asking that only one person use the bathrooms at a time. Wash your hands thoroughly and wipe down the sink when you are finished. Please refrain from using the water fountains.

At this time, there will be no in-person Sunday School. We invite you to join us online for Wednesday Night Check-ins and Bible and Brew for your deeper spiritual formation.

This all may seem a bit overwhelming, but don't worry—there are lots of helpful reminders posted around the church, and the members of the safety team and myself will be standing by to answer your questions and help you navigate these changes.

[Here's what you can expect if you choose to join us online.](#)

If you are still not comfortable returning to in-person worship, don't worry! We will continue to offer a worship livestream via zoom every Sunday morning. The online service will look a little different, however, as we will simply be livestreaming our in-person service.

An important note about communion: those who join us online are invited to participate in receiving communion. Just because you are home, doesn't mean you cannot experience the body and blood of Jesus. If you are able, have some bread and grape juice on-hand, and eat and drink at the appropriate time with the congregation. If you are unable to procure bread and grape juice, water and crackers are acceptable substitutes.

To join us online, simply click this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/836080286>
Alternatively, you can call +1 646 558 8656 and enter the code: 836 080 286

Readings and prayers will no longer be displayed on the screen during the service; however, you can follow along by downloading Sunday's bulletin from our website: beaverlutheranchurch.org.

If you desire to make a monetary offering but are not joining us for in-person worship, please go to our website and click the "donate" button. Alternatively, you can mail us your donation.

We walk together with God into this new normal.

We continue in a period of change as we adapt to this “new normal.” Our in-person worship services will feel differently than they did before. That’s okay! What is most important is that we gather together (online and in-person) to worship God, and we’re doing that.

While I lament what we have lost in the midst of this pandemic, I am also excited for what we have gained. We are now able to livestream our worship services. We have weekly opportunities for fellowship. The youth are gathering each week online. We now have a whole online community that we did not have before. And I hope this online community will continue, not as a replacement to our in-person community but alongside it!

This pandemic, while challenging, has opened doors of opportunity for us. What other ways might God be calling us to grow and change in the midst of this ongoing crisis?

The decision to join us online or in-person is entirely yours. I hope you will take the time to discern what is best for you based on your own physical, psychological, and spiritual health. Whether you are with us in-person, online, or in-spirit, know that you are a valuable member of this community.

Above all, remember that our God is with us, no matter where, no matter what. As we step into this new, challenging, and exciting chapter of our Beaver Lutheran Church life, we do so knowing that the God of all grace and love goes with us.

Before concluding, I wish to thank the members of the Safety Team who have worked hard to ensure our safety during worship: Bryon Beaver, Joe Feehrer, Leslie Feehrer, Teresa Hoffman, Sara Mattern, and Michelle Bixler. Thank you for creating a safe space for us to gather for worship!

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Jim