

Estherville Lutheran Church

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Dear Friends in Christ,

June 18, 2020

Thank you for your patience during this difficult time. I have to say that we miss seeing you come through the door every week and we look forward to that changing in the future. With the Country continuing to see spikes from the Coronavirus and now with the civil uneasiness, this is a time when people need Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Therefore, the council has decided to reopen Estherville Lutheran so that public worship is available for those that choose to participate.

Please know that in our preparation we are working hard to make everyone feel welcome and safe at the same time. While we are making many decisions about future worship services, it is certainly not our intent to exclude anyone from being a part of worship. However as I have suggested in past sermons, things will look different and worship will change at least for now in order to keep everyone safe.

Our first Worship Service at Estherville Lutheran will be Sunday morning, June 28, 2020 at 9:30 AM. While everyone is welcome, below is a list of changes that we as a faith community will need to be aware of and follow as you enter the sanctuary for worship.

- During a pandemic, the best way to “love thy neighbor” is to always remember social distancing. Along with maintaining a minimum of six feet of distance from each other, everyone will be required to wear a mask.
- In order to maintain the six feet distance between us, we will only be using every third pew. There will be an usher seating you and we will be filling the church from the front back. This is to eliminate cross traffic in the aisle. As we exit the sanctuary, we will be dismissing from the rear of the church. Again, to eliminate cross traffic.
- There will be no singing or responsive reading from the congregation. There will be a bulletin already laying in your pew when you sit down. You are encouraged to follow along, however, reading will need to be to yourself. Unfortunately, this includes the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed.
- There will be hand sanitizer in your pews to use as you enter and leave the church.
- There will be an offering plate or box at the rear of the church to place your offering in when you enter or leave the church.
- At this point in time, I am sorry to say there will be no communion. We are looking for a safe way to commune everyone; there will be more info to come.
- The pastor will not be greeting you as you come into or leave the church, and we will not be sharing the peace during worship.

- If we have more than one service, then the church will need to be cleaned before letting people in for the next service.
- Other rooms in the church will be closed, such as the friendship room at the rear of the church. We ask that these rooms not be used at this time. This will help with social distancing.
- The church will not serve Food and Coffee at this time.
- We also ask that you RSVP to the church office if you plan to attend on the 28th. This is to assure that we have enough seating available. 712-362-4607 or esterchurch@gmail.com
- Also remember that if you are considered an at risk person, the CDC still suggests that you consider staying home instead of attending any public event. However, you are welcome if you choose to come. The TV, radio broadcast, and access to the video on our website will still be available.

As I have said to many of you, this is so difficult for all of us. It goes against everything that we believe as a Christian. We would love to go back to the way it was before COVID-19 hit the world in ways that we would never have imagined. However, as we move forward things will start to change and some of the restrictions will start to ease up, or maybe they will develop a vaccination that will bring the pandemic to an end.

We may ask ourselves, with all of the rules and regulation is it worth coming back to church at this time? I think most all of us will ask that question at some point. Below is a list of reasons to attend in-person worship.

1. You may feel closest to God while in the sanctuary.
2. Your prayers seem to develop best during a time of worship.
3. You enjoy hearing the Word spoken and preached in person.
4. You love to hear amazing music within the walls of the sanctuary. That music feeds your soul.
5. You miss seeing your church family even when you cannot really talk to them.
6. Sunday just is not the same without in person worship.
7. You miss Pastor... as I do you!

These expectations may change, possibly even before June 28. If they change drastically, we will be in touch with you with another letter before the 28th. Also, know there will be people at both doors when you enter the church to help you with any questions you may have.

As I have said earlier, none of us likes this situation, but we will get through it with patience and a lot of prayer. Remember to love thy neighbor and be willing to change if needed. Thank you for being willing to adjust and we hope to see you in worship soon.

Jesus loves you,

The ELC Council and Pastor Tim