

May 19, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

As you know, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned the statewide “Safer at Home” order on Wednesday, May 13. That same evening, the City of Racine Public Health Department issued its own “Safer at Home” order to replace it. It closely resembles the state’s order, except that it removes the previously imposed nine-person limit on attendance at church worship services. Under the city’s order, worship attendance is now limited to 25 percent of our seating capacity, and we must practice social distancing as much as possible. I confirmed this information with a representative of the city’s public health department on Friday, May 15.

On Friday and Saturday, May 15 and 16, I worked closely with our Head Elder, Matthew Olson, to draft interim guidelines that are in compliance with the city’s order to allow us to resume regular in-person worship services on Sunday, May 17. These interim guidelines are as follows:

- We can resume in-person worship services at 25 percent of our seating capacity.
 - Conservatively, our nave can hold about 300 people, so 25 percent of that is 75. Since we will be starting our summer worship schedule on Thursday, May 28 (Thursdays at 6:30 pm and Sundays at 9:00 am), I do not think we will exceed the 75-person limit at any one service.
- Social distancing (six-foot distance between people, except for members of the same family) will be followed as much as possible.
 - Please keep your distance as best you can from other people.
 - Some rows of pews will be blocked off.
- Masks may be worn in church, but they are not required.
- I will wash my hands and use hand sanitizer before distributing Holy Communion. Hand sanitizer will also be available on stands near the trays for the used Communion cups for those who wish to use it.

- For the time being, only individual cups of Communion wine will be offered. The cups will be spaced throughout the trays to reduce the risk of touching another cup besides your own.
- Please keep some distance from others while at the Communion rail (families can remain together). Also, please remain standing so as not to touch the rail and possibly contaminate it.
- The children will not come forward for Catechism Time.
- The offering plates will be located at the back of the nave.
- The Fellowship Pads will not be completed at this time.
- I will stand at the back of the church to greet people after the service; however, please try to follow social distancing as much as possible when leaving. We cannot congregate at the entrances or exits. If you want to bypass me and leave the church by another way, I will not be offended.

I do not intend all of these to become permanent measures or practices at church. We will make changes to them, as necessary. The city’s order currently expires on Tuesday, May 26, and we do not yet know if it will be extended or how it might be changed. My hope is that as the situation with the coronavirus pandemic improves, we can return to our regular worship practices, including offering the common cup and kneeling for Holy Communion. These two customs are very important to me personally, and I have no intention of eliminating them permanently.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns. Thank you again for your prayers, understanding, and support of our congregation during this difficult time. I rejoice that we can resume our regular in-person worship services again, even as I pray for an end to this coronavirus pandemic. May God bless you and your families, and may He keep us all safe and healthy.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Brian Crane