



SAINT MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH

224 LOVELY STREET, ROUTE 177, AVON, CONNECTICUT 06001-4018

(860) 673-3301
stmatthewavon.org

November 2, 2020

Dear Members of the St. Matthew Family,

The Reopening Task Force was initiated in July to serve as the primary group to plan for the day on which we could as a congregation return to worshipping together in the sanctuary. Two main guiding principles have directed our work.

Guiding Principle #1 – that St. Matthew policy and procedures meet the spiritual and emotional needs of the congregation in ways that are both physically safe and embrace the range of views of St. Matthew church members.

Guiding Principle #2 – that the decisions made must continue to comply with current ELCA, state, federal, and clinical guidance for COVID-19 management. As the COVID-19 trajectory evolves, this collective guidance will also evolve and be revised, as necessary, in the coming months.

During the ensuing months, we have reviewed the member survey, interviewed staff, and reviewed and evaluated the recommended COVID-19 air quality recommendations as they pertain to our overall air mechanical systems at St. Matthew. The Reopening Task Force developed procedures which would enable us to begin offering outdoor services on August 30th. This recommendation was made to the Church Council which was approved by Council and then initiated.

The Reopening Task Force is now at a point in which we are planning for our first indoor service which will be held in the sanctuary on November 15, 2020. Each member/family will need to review our completed reopening safety measures to determine whether they feel safe and comfortable returning to the sanctuary for services. Pre-registration to attend will be required to further reserve seating for those in attendance. Our November Newsletter includes an article entitled, “What to Expect When Coming to Indoor, In-person Worship” which will help to describe our safety protocols for indoor services.

Please note that the on-line virtual services will continue each Sunday at 9am via Zoom throughout the pandemic and will continue to be recorded for those who wish to view the service at a later time.

To date, the following safety plans have been accomplished by the Reopening Task Force:

- The air flow within the sanctuary has been evaluated to be within the recommended guidelines. The air volume changes 5.5 times per hour which includes 5% fresh air.
- Our contractor, B.T. Lindsey, has evaluated our entire HVAC system and has completed and installed MERV 8 filters which are a significant improvement from our old aluminum filters. These filters will be able to be discarded and replaced following a recommended schedule.
- A seating chart has been designed to enable 9-foot distancing between participants. Congregation members will be required to pre-register and will be directed to their seat by the ushers. The ushers will also assist with the exiting procedure. Seating will be limited.
- The length of the service will be shorter to lessen the time parishioners will be in the sanctuary.
- The pews will be cleaned with disinfectant following each Sunday service. No hymnals or other items will be in the pews to eliminate contact touching. No name tags will be utilized.
- A shield has been placed around our organist to ensure his safety as parishioners walk past.
- The service will not include front of the church communion or singing by the congregation or choir.
- Flip signs noting (Occupied or Unoccupied) will be placed on the restroom doors to ensure only one person uses the facility at a time.
- Hand sanitizer will be available, and masks will be required.

I commend the Reopening Task Force for all their hard work and dedication. While no in-person indoor activities are considered risk-free during this pandemic, the Reopening Task Force has been able to reduce risk by the actions described above. Each person must assess their own personal level of risk before determining whether indoor in-person worship at St. Matthew is right for them. The Reopening Task Force will continue to advise the Church Council as we continue to deal with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours in Christ,



Jack Pietrick, SMLC Council President

Reopening Task Force Members:

Doug Peterson & Kathy Alsgaard, Co-Chairpersons

Pastor Julie Ellen Ericson Tom Leonard John Pearson Jack Pietrick