

COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATES FOR NEW LIFE LUTHERAN

11/16/2021

- As our Leadership continues to navigate the ongoing Covid-19 reality. We have tried to make it a priority to return to normal safely and wisely at an appropriate pace.
- In response, we will be making some slight adjustments starting in December.
 1. We will no longer be assigning rows to specific services but will trust people to use their best judgment as they choose how close or far, they would like to sit from others.
 2. No longer will our Communion mini chalices be waiting for you in your assigned row. Instead, they will be made available before you enter the Sanctuary.
 3. Bulletins will also no longer be placed in your seat but will be handed to you by our ushers as you enter the Sanctuary.
- Please, be praying for our community, nation, and world as we continue navigating this season of life together.

9/1/2021

- On August 30, 2021, a mandatory mask mandate was put into effect for indoor environments for those 2 years old and older within Illinois (<https://www.illinois.gov/government/executive-orders/executive-order-executive-order-number-20.2021.html>). However, religious institutions do not fall under this mandate and are allowed to operate in the best way that they see fit to serve their faith community in loving, wise, and safe ways.
- Due to this freedom and responsibility, the Leadership Team met Tuesday evening (August 31) to discuss the best way forward for our diverse family that includes individuals who have strongly held convictions on all sides of the conversation about both masks and vaccines. After looking through the latest health data and discussing how well our members have navigated this difficult time. The Leadership Team will continue to trust our church family to be loving, wise, and safe each week by implementing their best mitigation strategies to protect themselves, their families, and those around them by taking into consideration the latest CDC guidelines.
- As a result, you can expect the following:

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- We will continue to ask that you utilize the assigned rows for each service to best allow for social distancing.
- We will continue to weekly utilize our mini chalices of bread and wine for Holy Communion to allow for social distancing.

MASKS

- We will continue to provide masks at the front door and trust everyone to make the best decision for themselves, their families, and those around them while respecting the individual values of those they come in contact with.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- We will continue to implement social distancing within all our ministries, as much as possible.

FOOD

- We will continue to provide food in safe and wise ways at the discretion of each ministry team.

MINISTRIES

- We will continue to move forward with all our ministries that our Ministry Staff oversee starting on September 12th (Kids, Teens, Media Arts, Choir, Handbells, Life Groups, and Worship Services). Volunteer-led ministries, as always, will be at each person's discretion to lead or participate.

8/18/2021

- At last night's Leadership Team meeting, it was discussed how to renormalize much of our ministry at New Life Lutheran in a safe and loving way to best bring Christ's transformation to the hearts and lives of our community and world. As a result, below are the adapts will take place on September 12th.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- Starting on September 12th, we will be opening all our seats for our worship services and trust each individual or family to sit where they feel most comfortable while respecting others.
- During weekly Holy Communion, we will continue to utilize our mini chalices in our seats with a hope to ween ourselves away from this practice or only use it as a part of Communion practices as we receive the promises of God.

MASKS & SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social distancing will be our primary tool for mitigating risk for transmittable diseases, and we trust each individual and family to best know how to respect others in this regard. Masks will continue to be suggested when Social Distancing isn't possible, but we will not be making a mandate for any age. People will be trusted to mitigate their own risk for activities for themselves and their families.

FOOD

- Safe & wise food preparation and distribution will continue to be permitted; our snack table will be available starting on September 12th.

MINISTRIES

- All ministries that our Ministry Staff oversee will be moving forward starting on September 12th (Kids, Teens, Media Arts, Choir, Handbells, Life Groups, and Worship Services). Volunteer-led ministries, as always, will be at each person's discretion to lead or participate.

PAST COVID-19 RESPONSES

5/19/2021

MASKS

- Due to the latest adaptations by the CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/recommendations-fully-vaccinated>, masks will only be suggested for those who are unvaccinated. Masks, hand sanitizer, and water bottles will still be made available for everyone's safety and comfort.

5/12/2021

- As we enter the Bridge Plan as a state <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/bridge-phase> the following adjustments will be made starting on May 30, 2021.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- Our weekend worship services are now allowed to have up to 250 individuals to participate at each of our in-person worship services. As a response to this next step of our state's Covid response and in correlation with the summer months, we will be shifting to two services during the summer months starting on May 30th. Our Traditional Worship Service will happen at 8:30a, and our Modern Service will take place at 10:00a. As we continue to strive to provide a place for people to connect and be transformed by Christ in a comfortable and safe environment, we will continue having rows assigned for specific services. In addition, many of the previous mitigation techniques will still be in place: hand sanitizer readily available, face masks provided, individual water bottles on hand, and single serving Communion accessible in each seat.

BUILDING USAGE (Ministry Teams & Life Groups)

- Our campus will remain open for ministry opportunities while taking into consideration the latest state adjustments which will expand our Ministry Teams, Life Groups, Weddings, and Funerals to 250 participants within our building at a time. During our current mitigation efforts, Member's Events that do not fall within the parameters of Life Groups, Ministry Teams, Funerals, or Weddings will need to be held off campus or receive special approval through the Leadership Team.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY & YOUTH MINISTRY

- Our Children's Ministry team will continue to provide excellent online content for parents, guardians, and grandparents to equip them with resources to help cultivate their child's faith. You can get connected at (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/618468052332070>).
- Our Youth Ministry is currently taking a break for the summer, as we continue our search for a Family Life Director or Pastor that will oversee and lead our Children's Ministry & Youth Ministry.

1/25/2021

- Due to the recent adaptations that moved Region #1 to Tier 1 <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-phase-4> the following adjustments will be made.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- Our weekend worship services, we will continue to provide in-person and online Sunday Worship Services up to 100 individuals to allow our church

family to continue to connect with God and each other as we showcase our love for God and each other by providing safe opportunities for all with all our safety precautions continuing to be in place.

BUILDING USAGE (Ministry Teams & Life Groups)

- Our campus will remain open for ministry opportunities while taking into consideration the latest state adjustments which will expand our Ministry Teams, Life Groups, Weddings, and Funerals to 50 participants within our building at a time. During our current mitigation efforts, Member's Events that do not fall within the parameters of Life Groups, Ministry Teams, Funerals, or Weddings will need to be held off campus.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Our Children's Ministry team will continue to provide excellent online content for parents, guardians, and grandparents to equip them with resources to help cultivate their child's faith. You can get connected at (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/618468052332070>).

CONFIRMATION/YOUTH MINISTRY

- Our Youth Ministry will continue to meet in-person and online (www.nllutheran.com) while following the mitigation efforts to grow our teens spiritually and protect them physically.

1/20/2021

TIER 1 ADAPTIONS

- Due to the recent adaptations that moved Region #1 to Tier 1 <https://dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19/IL%20Tier%201%20Resurgence%20Mitigations%20-%20January%2015,%202021%20Update1.pdf> the following adjustments will be made for our church family.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- Our weekend worship services, we will continue to provide in-person and online Sunday Worship Services to allow our church family to continue to connect with God and each other as we showcase our love for God and each other by providing safe opportunities for all with all our safety precautions continuing to be in place.

BUILDING USAGE (Ministry Teams & Life Groups)

- Our campus will be re-opened for ministry opportunities while taking into consideration the latest state adjustments which will limit our Ministry

Teams, Life Groups, Weddings, and Funerals to 25 participants within our building at a time. During our current mitigation efforts, Member's Events that do not fall within the parameters of Life Groups, Ministry Teams, Funerals, or Weddings will need to be held off campus.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Our Children's Ministry team will continue to provide excellent online content for parents, guardians, and grandparents to equip them with resources to help cultivate their child's faith. You can get connected at (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/618468052332070>).

CONFIRMATION/YOUTH MINISTRY

- Our Youth Ministry will continue to meet in-person and online (www.nllutheran.com) while following the mitigation efforts to grow our teens spiritually and protect them physically.

11/20/2020

TIER 3 ADAPTIONS

- Due to additional Tier 3 mitigation strategies on Region #1 and the state of Illinois (<https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-mitigation-plan>), necessary adaptations will once again be made that affect our church family.

CAMPUS CLOSURE

- During Tier 3, our campus will be closed outside of our Sunday Worship Services, this will mean that no groups will be allowed in the church throughout the week outside of our Sunday Worship Services.
- However, our Ministry Staff will continue their regular office hours and our weekly On-Call Pastor will continue to serve our church family throughout the week.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- As far as our weekend worship services, we will continue to provide in-person and online Sunday Worship with our continued safety precautions in place to make sure that you can continue to be connected with God and each other as we showcase our love for God and the world by providing safe opportunities for all.

CONFIRMATION/YOUTH MINISTRY

- Since we will not be having any gatherings during Tier #3, our Middle School Confirmation program and High School Youth Group will be meeting completely online.

10/25/2020

TIER 2 ADAPPTIONS

- Due to additional Tier 2 mitigations enforced on Region #1 (https://www2.illinois.gov/ILSNews/22253-Tier_2_COVID-19_Resurgence_Migitations.pdf), necessary adaptations will need to be made that affect our church family.

CAMPUS CLOSURE

- During Tier 2, our campus will be closed outside of our Sunday Worship Services, this will mean that any groups or individuals wanting to use the church facility will require special approval & reservation to guarantee that we remain under our 10 person cap.
- Since our Ministry Staff will be continuing their regular office hours, this essentially will mean that our campus will be completely closed during regular office hours.
- In response, our Ministry Staff, Youth Ministry, Ministry Teams, Life Groups, etc., this will look to provide creative, safe, law-abiding opportunities for you and/or your children during this season including: meeting online, providing online opportunities, gathering outside, or meeting in smaller groups.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

- As far as our weekend worship services, we will continue to provide in-person and online Sunday Worship with all of our safety precautions in place to make sure that you can continue to be connected with God and each other as we showcase our love for God and each other by providing safe opportunities for all.

10/16/2020

MINISTRY STAFF EXPOSURE RESPONSE

- As you are probably aware our campus is currently closed due to a positive Covid-19 case within our Ministry Staff that we became aware of on October 14 around noon. Due to the close working relationship of a majority of our Ministry Staff (all of whom are currently awaiting Covid-19

test results and are required to quarantine), this left us without our usual Ministry Staff for the next two weekends.

- During a special Leadership Team Meeting last evening, we have decided to pivot to best serve our church family and community by going completely online for the next two weekends. Instead of our usual weekend worship experiences, Pastor Ben, Pastor Erik, and Danny Moore (our Modern Worship Director) will be digitally inviting you into their homes to continue sharing the truth of Christ in a safe environment for all of those involved at our usual worship times (Sunday at 8:00a, 9:30a, and 11:00a) through our website (nllutheran.com), Facebook, and YouTube.
- The Leadership Team and Ministry Staff appreciate your own going patience, support, and prayer during this difficult time, and we look forward to joining you in worship online for the next two weekends and hope to safely return to worship as soon as possible.

10/14/2020

CAMPUS CLOSURE

- Out of an abundance of caution and a response to the request of the Whiteside County Health Department, we will be closing our offices from noon on October 14th through October 27th due to possible Covid-19 exposures within our Ministry Staff. This will mean that any Life Group or Ministry Team that would be using our building during this time will need to meet elsewhere or postpone their meeting times until after the quarantine period is over.
- As far as our weekend worship experiences, we will have more information as soon as possible to share how we will best, safely serve our New Life Lutheran family.

9/30/2020

PHASE #4 MITIGATION AMMENDMENTS

- As this month comes close, we find ourselves amid additional mitigation efforts by our state for Region #1.
- With our ongoing efforts to live out our mission and vision as a church with a priority to love God by loving his prized possessions: church members, non-members, followers of Christ, non-followers of Christ, volunteer staff, and paid ministry staff, we will be making the following adjustments during this season of mitigation.

BUILDING USAGE (Ministry Teams & Life Groups)

- Our campus will continue to be open for ministry opportunities while taking into consideration the latest state adjustments which will limit our Ministry Teams, Life Groups, Weddings, and Funerals to 25 participants within our building at a time (Worship Services will continue to fall under the category of the Places of Worship Guidance set by the state- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/places-worship-guidance>). During our current mitigation efforts and throughout Phase #4, Member's Events that do not fall within the parameters of Life Groups or Ministry Teams will need to be held off campus.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Our Children's Ministry team will continue to provide excellent online content for parents, guardians, and grandparents to equip them with resources to help cultivate their child's faith. You can get connected at (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/618468052332070>).

YOUTH MINISTRY

- Our Youth Ministry will continue to meet in-person and online (www.nllutheran.com) while following the mitigation efforts to grow our teens spiritually and protect them physically.

WORSHIP SERVICES

- Our worship services will continue to be provided for in-person and online attendance (www.nllutheran.com) with our ongoing safety measures in place.

9/15/2020

BUILDING USAGE

- Though our campus is open for ministry opportunities, it is not available for all activities. During Phase #4, Member's Events that do not fall within the parameters of Life Groups or Ministry Teams will need to be held off campus. However, events specifically designed to support our community during the pandemic will be individually considered by our Leadership Team.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Thank you to all of those who filled out our Children's Ministry Survey. Prompted by the feedback that we received, we will continue to only offer online Children's Ministry to empower and equip parents, grandparents, and guardians to raise their children in the faith.

8/18/2020

PHASE #4 AMMENDMENTS

- As we have continued to live out our mission and vision as a church to bring Christ's transformation to our community and world, we have made it a priority to love God by loving his creation: church members, non-members, followers of Christ, non-followers of Christ, volunteer staff, and paid ministry staff.
- In response to this value system, we will be clarifying and making the following adjustments to better serve our community and world.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- At present, we will not be having in-person Children's Ministry or Nursery. However, we will be providing online engagement opportunities to equip parents and/or grandparents to raise their children in the faith. In addition, we be creating a survey for parents to share what they are feeling about our ongoing Children's Ministry efforts, so that we can best serve them.

CHOIR/HANDBELLS

- Throughout Phase #4, we will not be having Choir or Handbells due to the high-risk nature of these ministries. However, we will be offering opportunities for people to use their gifts in smaller musical groups.

WORSHIP SERVICES

- Throughout Phase #4, we are limited to 100 people in our sanctuary for each worship service. At present our Traditional Service is about at capacity causing us to switch to two services starting in September for the safety of our in-person attenders. One of these Traditional Services will be at 8:00am, and the other will be at 9:30am. Currently, our Modern Service is not at the threshold, but it has been growing consistently. To better serve our community, we are looking to add additional online options and preparing for more in-person options. As you can imagine, each of these adjustments requires additional work, time, and manpower that, quite

frankly, we do not have. This requires us to remove something. Due to these adjustments, we will be removing our Saturday Casual Worship Service, which has averaged 19 attenders including 6-7 paid or volunteer staff members following our Re-Gathering efforts in the end of July. We appreciate each person who has attended our Saturday Service in the past and look forward to serving them on Sunday or online.

6/17/2020

PHASE #4

- As this month ends, we find the state of Illinois moving into Phase #4. This allows us to operate a little differently, so we have developed an updated list below for our members, regular attenders, and guests to know what is going on and what is coming up.
- As the Leadership Team continues to deliberate over these items there are three things that they are considering.
 1. Our Mission & Vision as a church body to our community and world. (Matthew 28).
 2. Our Biblical response to the leadership that God has put over us. (Romans 13).
 3. Our responsibility to provide a safe environment for our staff, volunteers, members, and guests (Matthew 22).
- Below you will find information for how we will operate depending on the Phase that we are in. If we were to be downgraded to a previous Phase, we will operate with within the guidelines of the correlating Phase.

WORSHIP SERVICES

- Phase #4
 - In-person and on-line Worship Services will be available beginning on July 11th & 12th.
 - Due to the ongoing reality of the Covid-19 virus, you will notice some differences:
 - As you enter, there will be either no greeters or the greeters will be wearing facemasks and waving instead of shaking hands or hugging.
 - In the Atrium, there will be no food and seating options will be limited. We will be encouraging people to gather outside before and after the services if they wish to connect.
 - Once you enter the Sanctuary, you will notice that the chairs will be arranged differently, with some rows taped off with families spaced 4 seats apart from each other.

- On your seat, you will find a bulletin and individually packaged Communion for you to utilize.
 - You will find that there will be no common touch items in the pews such as: pens, Connection Cards, Bibles, or hymnals.
 - During our offering time, the plates will not be passed. Instead, giving may be done online, through the mail, or at the service by dropping it in the offering plate in the back.
 - You will also notice that there will be no in-person Children's Ministry offerings, including nursery, since we are asking that families stay together.
- Worship Services will remain online through our website (www.nllutheran.com), Facebook, and YouTube.
- Baptisms, funerals, and weddings within the church building will now be hard capped at gatherings of 50 or less.
- *Phase #3*
 - *Worship Services will remain online through our website (www.nllutheran.com), Facebook, and YouTube.*
 - *Since we are allowed gatherings of 10 or less, with safety precautions in place, we strongly encourage church members to provide a safe environment for other New Life members or guests to join them in worship within their home or outside of their home with all CDC suggested safety precautions in place.*
 - *Baptisms, funerals, and weddings within the church building will continue being hard capped at gatherings of 10 or less.*

CLOSED CAMPUS

- Phase #4
 - During Phase #4, our Church Campus will be open during regular office hours and for scheduled events beginning on July 11, 2020.
 - We ask that as you utilize the campus you take appropriate safety precautions since some of our Essential Staff and Volunteers fit into the high-risk categories.
- Phase #3
 - *Our campus will be closed to all non-essential Ministry Staff and Volunteer Staff through Phase #3.*
 - *The Staff will continue working from home unless it is necessary that they be in the building. The Office phone calls will continue to be forwarded to our Ministry Staff.*
 - *We ask that you respect our Closed Campus since some of our Essential Staff fit into the high-risk categories. An innocent journey*

through the church could cripple our potential for offering our weekly worship experiences.

LIFE GROUPS

- Phase #4
 - We strongly encourage Life Groups to continue meeting during this difficult time.
 - We suggest that you look for safe opportunities to meet in groups of 50 or less in-person or meet online.
 - If you would like to get connected with a Life Group or start a gathering contact Pastor Erik by emailing him (erik.anderson@nllutheran.com) or calling the Church Office (815-499-6552)
- Phase #3
 - *We strongly encourage Life Groups to continue meeting during this difficult time.*
 - *We suggest you look for safe opportunities to meet in groups of 10 or less in-person or meet online with as many people as you would like.*

MINISTRY TEAMS

- Phase #4
 - Onsite, in-person Ministry Teams may begin, but we suggest that they follow all safety precautions including meeting with 50 or less people.
 - The Covid-19 Task Force will continue to serve our community's needs.
- Phase #3
 - *Offsite, in-person Ministry Teams may begin, but we suggest that they follow all safety precautions including meeting with 10 or less people.*
 - *The Covid-19 Task Force will continue to serve our community's needs.*

YOUTH MINISTRY

- Phase #4
 - Our Youth Ministry will provide in-person and online options during Phase #4, with in-person gathering limited to 50 students or less with appropriate safety precautions.
- Phase #3

- *Our Youth Ministry will continue to meet online.*
- *Off-site in-person gatherings of 10 or less students will be permitted with appropriate safety guidelines required.*

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Phase #4 & Phase #3
 - Online Children's Ministry will continue throughout Phase #3 & Phase #4.
 - No in-person opportunities, including Nursery will happen during this time.

HEALTH SAFETY GUIDELINES

- If you are feeling sick, please stay home.
- We recommend facemasks for all individuals when social distancing is not an option.
- Continue to sanitize and wash your hands frequently.
- And as always, remember that your comfort level might not be the same as other individuals in our community, so please do not let your comfort be their discomfort (Romans 14).

FUTURE UPDATES

- The news cycle is moving very quickly, so the Leadership Team is meeting bi-weekly to update our procedures to the latest CDC recommendations, while respecting the leadership that God has put over us to continue bringing transformation to our community and world.
- As soon as there are any adjustments, we will let you know.