Dear Saints of God in Christ Jesus of Salem Lutheran Church,

By June 7, we will have had 13 Sundays, including three midweek Lenten Services, Holy Week and the entirety of the Easter Season worshipping in our homes, gathered around our computers, phones, tablets, and TV screens. To put it bluntly, the devil has taken a mighty swing at the restriction of God’s Word of Christ’s death and resurrection from being proclaimed and just as he took a mighty swing on Good Friday our Lord has triumphed gloriously.

Thanks be to God that we have had the opportunity to receive God’s Word through our home resources, online resources, and encourage and support each other as the people of God. There is no arguing the last three months have been less than ideal to have worship services online, but it is certainly better than nothing. One positive thing that has come about from this the increasing online ministry. The Word of God is being proclaimed to far more people than ever before through the gift of online tools. Online ministry is now here to stay, just as radio and television ministry has stayed from the past.

With this in mind, it is time to gather again as the people of God. Our Lord is an incarnational God. He came to be with us in human form. We use this word “incarnate” in our confession of faith in the Creed. It means, in the flesh, embodied. He came to be with us, not virtually or even in a spiritual way, but as we confess in the Creed, He came to be with us in a body, He came to be with us in person. He comes to us in person still, in a preached Word, in water, in bread and wine that is His body and blood. Our Lord loves to be with His people and have His people gathered together with each other. We are called not to be a people spread out, but a people gathered.

There have been times in history where the church has been spread out. We think to the Old Testament church as they were in exile and could not worship in their temple. We know that the Lord led them back and through the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt the city and the temple. Even the New Testament Church at times has been scattered in eras of persecution. Even most recently in 1918 during the Spanish Flu epidemic, churches were closed in various parts of the country for a while. Frankly, the church is still scattered, we are not together, we scattered across geography and time. There is coming a time when God’s people will finally be all together with our Shepherd, Jesus. For now, we wait for that day, but our time of waiting to come back into the house of the Lord is nearing an end.

Now, some of you may not be comfortable coming back into large gatherings yet, we respect that and ask you to continue informing pastor what is going on so that we can take care of you spiritually. Know that pastor is praying for you and praying for the day that we can all be together.

With that being said it is time to gather once again. On June 14 we will open our doors for public worship again. That will be day that we can give God thanks and praise. This decision has not been made lightly. We know that the risk of the virus is still out there so we are going to be making some changes to our worship schedule and what it will look like.

Services and Details

Capacity will be 50 people per service, this keeps with the recommendation for our building size and capacity while allowing for social distancing. During the worship service we will have all windows and doors to the sanctuary open, with fans blowing to allow for some extra ventilation in the building

Service Times: Sundays beginning June 14: 8:30 am and 10:30 am (10:30 am will be on Facebook live).

To attend please sign up on Signup Genius (link will be emailed and posted on our website and social media) or call the church office to be signed up.

**Considerations when attending services:**

* Bulletin and order of service will be placed in the pews. There will no hymnals, communion cards, or pencils in the pews. If you want to provide a pencil or crayons for your kids, please do so but take them home afterwards.
* We will be seating you from the front to the back and then dismissing you back to front.
* Attendance for both worship and communion will be taken by an elder/usher.
* Every other pew is available for seating. One household per pew please. However, if there is a one-person household there may be another one-person household sitting on the opposite end of the pew.
* Offering plates will be the entrance to the sanctuary and in front of the church as you approach the communion rail.
	+ The plates will be sanitized between the service. Thank you for your faithful and generous support during this time. Also, online giving remains available at salembarron.com.
* Communion distribution will be done by pew. You will receive the host (wafer) in an individual cup that you will take from a table. You will then receive the wine in and individual cup and after receiving both, the pastor will do the dismissal per pew. If you have been to one of pastor’s individual family communion services, it will look similar to that. Both the Pastor and the Elder will be wearing masks and sanitizing their hands. We will not be placing the elements into your hands but placing them onto the table to adhere to the social distancing guidelines. There will be a garbage can on both sides that will be used for disposing of these cups.
* When the worship service is done, please take all bulletins and any other personal belongings home with you. We should not have them left in the pews or on any tables. We will not reuse them. If you choose to do so, there will be a garbage can at the exit to the church so you can throw them away. We will be replacing bulletins in the pews between the services.
* We will also need some help sanitizing the pews in between the services, so consider serving your neighbor in this way.
* When it comes to masks, we strongly encourage you to wear your masks, this will help protect your neighbor during this time. We will not require masks, but out of respect for your neighbor and his or her well-being, we ask you to wear them.
* When it comes to singing there is some science that says this virus will spread farther through singing, this is another reason to wear a mask if you are a robust singer.
* Finally, please do not congregate in the building, parking lot or other outdoor areas at this time. Feel free to greet briefly outside.

**Sunday School, Bible Studies, and other meetings:**

* Sunday School is on break for the summer.
* Pastor will host a bible study via zoom on a date to be determined.
* Meetings of the various church groups and boards will be determined if they will be held in person or via zoom by those participants.

**Communion hours:**

* Wednesday from 9am-12 noon and 4-5 PM
* These hours are for those that choose not to be in worship at this time. If these times do not work, please contact pastor to make separate arrangements.
* Along with communion, pastor is still unable to do shut-in visits to nursing homes and to be consistent, will not be visiting shut-ins in their homes. If there is a special request for a visit, please contact pastor and he will work with you during this time to take care of your spiritual needs.

Again, please stay home if you are sick, anyone in your household is sick, or showing symptoms. The last thing we want at Salem is to be known as the church where an outbreak occurred. Also, if you are high risk or uncomfortable yet with social gatherings, we understand. There is freedom in the Gospel for taking such care and precaution. Please continue to make use of our online service opportunities and make time to receive the Lord’s gifts in Holy Communion. I would remind you of the CDC definition of close contact is 10 minutes within six feet. Trust God. He wants you to be in contact with you.

It is a strange time still. We have lots of Gospel freedom, but do not want to offend our brother or sister in Christ. Hopefully, these precautions make everyone feel comfortable and safer at home in the house of the Lord. They are still not ideal. But it is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad (Psalm 118:24) in it while being glad when they said unto us, let us go into the house of the Lord (Psalm 122:1).

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Nielsen or one of the Elders.

In Your Service,

Pastor Nielsen

Board of Elders

Please fill out the following survey:

<https://forms.gle/Nth43vpHBzWAe9Xq6>

June Worship Sign-up

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040A4CAFA82AABF85-june>