

The Transition Team met on Monday May 17, 2021. The Goal of this meeting was to review our current COVID-19 Preparedness Plan and begin the process of transitioning our worship services and other activities that will support a physical, emotional, and spiritual environment within Redeemer in which all congregation members: can enter feeling valued and respected; comfortable and safe; with Christian love for each other and consideration of our individual and collective needs; able to focus on Worship and The Word; and join in full communion with all members of Redeemer's Family of Believers.

Our discussion considered multiple factors including the following:

1. Vaccines have been proven to be efficacious in prevention of COVID-19, the transmission of COVID-19, and the reduction in risk of severe infection and death,
2. The percentage of people who have been vaccinated continues to grow, especially in Minnesota, Olmsted County, and Rochester
3. The number of cases has been declining in most states and communities in the United States, including Rochester
4. The Centers for Disease Control has declared that vaccinated individuals no longer need to wear masks in most situations
5. Governor Walz declared an end to the mask mandate (as did the city of Rochester) for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals on Friday, May 14.
6. Serious concerns remain regarding emergence of COVID variants, the effectiveness of the vaccine in protection from these variants, and the lack of an approved vaccination for our children.
7. Use of face coverings is one of several documented interventions that can prevent spread of the virus to susceptible individuals, especially in situations and activities where potentially infectious aerosols are produced in greater amounts, for example singing.
8. Redeemer has undertaken significant actions to improve the safety of the church's physical environment for all members:
 - Markedly improved ventilation and fresh air flow into the sanctuary utilizing a damper system, as well as installation of an air exchange system to the office space and exhaust fan to the choir room.
 - Installation of bipolar ionization technology into the ventilation system to remove harmful particles from the air
 - Purchased multiple air purifiers with high filtration HEPA Filters to further reduce air particles, including virus, for use in the sanctuary, narthex, classrooms and fellowship halls
 - Maintained regular cleaning of high touch surfaces including the pews
 - Readily accessible hand sanitizer throughout the facility
 - Modified seating arrangements to maximize worship service attendance but permit safe spacing of households

In celebration of the recent announcements by the Centers for Disease Control and the Governor of Minnesota and the facts before us at this time, Redeemer Lutheran Church Transition Team believes we can safely and confidently **begin the transition effective June 14, 2021, (Weekend of June 17/20)** with the following actions:

1. **Mask use while inside the church facility is optional but is recommended out of care and concern for all of our members**, especially: (1) Those who are immune compromised due to a health

condition or are at serious risk of deterioration in health status if infected with COVID, (2) Members who are not yet comfortable not wearing a mask in public spaces, (3) and those who have not yet been vaccinated, including our children. Because of the increased risk that singing poses, we are encouraging masks to be worn during the singing of hymns for indoor services and recommended when singing in close proximity to others outdoors. Other outdoor church activities do not require mask use.

2. **For now, we will continue to encourage social distancing** with use of every other pew in the sanctuary and spacing of chairs in the sanctuary. However, separate households are encouraged to sit together if mutually agreed. Ushers will continue to assist in seating, but ushering out after services will be discontinued.
3. **Pastors and staff with Elder consultation can move forward with resumption of our normal worship service structure as circumstances allow.**
4. **Groups meeting at Redeemer can decide how their individual group will use masks and social distancing** based upon the information in point #1 above. HOWEVER, we do recommend use of face masks while in common areas of the church if other people are present in those areas.
5. **It remains important for all members to continue other safe health practices shown to reduce the likelihood of spread of COVID:**
 - Avoid any attendance at any church function if you are in anyway feeling ill or have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19 in the previous two weeks
 - Use hand sanitizer frequently
 - Respect other peoples' space and touch preferences (for example, how close to sit, how close to stand when visiting, fist bumps vs. handshakes, verbal greetings vs. hugs, etc.)
6. **Starting Memorial Day Weekend: For outdoor services and other outdoor church activities, masks are optional. This** includes during the outdoor refreshments between summer Sunday services.

Please be assured that this is just the joyful beginning of the opening process. We know some will be disappointed in the delays in opening. However, the Redeemer staff and the Transition Team feel it is important to take these next few weeks for planning, for conversations, for additional communications to you, and especially for prayer so we do proceed in ways that demonstrate love for each other and our different levels of comfort with these changes. The Transition Team will continue to meet periodically and make further recommendations as the summer goes on. We encourage you to reach out to Dr. Lowell Dale, Plan Administrator or any of the Transition Team members with comments or concerns.

Lowell Dale (507-421-4059; lcdale1953@gmail.com)
Grant Wilson (wilson.grant@chartermi.net)
Megan Grudem (303-324-4681; grudem.megan@mayo.edu)
Delores McGillivray (507-288-6948; ddmcgillivray@gmail.com)
Ric Thieke (507-259-1549; ric.thieke@yahoo.com)
Aaron Peter (507-624-0197; gopherfans@gmail.com)
Tim Kanne (507-282-3189; tkanne@domaillecompanies.com)