

# Bethany Lutheran Church

6 Leo Moss Drive  
Olean, NY 14760

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August 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

These past six months have presented all of us with challenges we never could have imagined. They have caused us to rethink what it means to be Church and how we live together as communities of faith in the midst of a pandemic. We were forced to shelter in our homes for the safety of our communities and out of love and respect for each other. While all of this was happening, we were asked to wrestle with the entrenched systems of racism and discrimination. Every day seems to bring new situations and updated information, which requires us to continually adapt and change how we live.

I know that this has been hard on each and every one of us. I know that there have been times of great sadness and struggle. I also know that we are a strong community that has been and will always be there for each other. I am writing again to update you to more changes in our ongoing situation and options regarding Church Worship.

Since May, we have been providing Sunday Worship Services by Zoom and as of the first Sunday of July, we have been providing Sunday Worship Services in the Parking Lot of Bethany Lutheran Church via radio transmission. The first Sunday of August we began the option of some fellowship time on the Church side lawn with face masks and social distancing. We will be continuing with these options through August and the first week of September. Starting the week of September 13<sup>th</sup>, we will be holding Church Worship Services in the Church facilities utilizing all possible options to keep these worship services as safe as possible. First Sunday Service will be September 13 at 11:00am. Church buildings, which have no ventilation systems have been and continue to be sites of "super-spreader" events in the pandemic. Returning to inside worship means using all possible options to prevent the spread of the virus. Even with our best efforts, we cannot make church proper completely safe at this point in time. Anyone with underlying health conditions and/or over the age of 65, who are concerned about their safety, are encouraged to remain at home. We will still continue the option of Zoom worship and will continue the live radio broadcast. Everyone attending worship services will be required to sign an attendance book for tracing purposes and is required to wear a mask throughout their time in worship, except when actually taking communion. If anyone is not willing to do such, they should remain at home and can use the option of the Zoom worship or remain in their car and use the radio option. Anyone who has had a known exposure to COVID or is awaiting a COVID test result, or anyone who does not feel well or suspects that they might have symptoms of COVID should not come to any worship service. If we become aware that anyone who attended an in-facility worship at Bethany has tested positive for COVID, we will take the necessary actions required by the Health Department and if necessary, shut down the Church Facilities for a minimum of 14 days.

For those who decide to come back to in-facility worship, our services will be necessarily different than what we have been used to in the past. I want to prepare you for these

changes. After signing in, please enter and find your seat and do not move around the building unnecessarily. Since we have windows that can be opened, we will return to worship in the sanctuary where we can open up windows and allow for air flow that lessens the possibility of transmission of the virus. Everyone in attendance must wear face masks during the whole time we are together and practice social distancing. Pews will be marked off to maintain distance seating. Households may sit together, but should maintain social distancing from other individuals or households. We will be using a modified, shorter, version of our worship service. We will have limited singing and congregational responses, all while wearing our masks. There will be no passing of the peace and no passing of the offering plates. Your offering may be placed in a stationary offering plate as you enter. Communion, will be offered at each service in a different manner than you are accustomed to. Communion wafers will not be distributed in hand and wine will be in individual cups – much the same way we have been using for the Parking Lot Worship. There will be no indoor social hour, but we may continue to gather outside, continuing to mask and socially distance. If at any time, the situation regarding the virus worsens and we feel it necessary for the health and safety of our members, we will discontinue these in-facility worship options and continue with our alternative methods.

Also, critical to us moving inside is the need to disinfect all "touch" surfaces following any event. To this end we need cleaning teams of two people to commit to doing this after worship each Sunday. It should take about 15 minutes and involves following a checklist of surfaces to wipe down. Please contact Muriel Frable at 716-372-9040 to signup.

Please know that, as is necessary, we will continue to adapt all that we do, according to the most updated information available from the CDC, the NY State Health Department, and our Synod.

I continue to keep you all in my prayers.

Faithfully, In Christ

Pastor Kim

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