

COVID 19: Resuming Worship at Spruce Run Evangelical
Lutheran Zion Church

Glen Gardner, NJ

28 June 2020

IN THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Spruce Run Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church will resume worship services on Sunday, 28 June 2020 because the following authorities have approved indoor worship:

1. The President of the United States recommends that faith-based organizations may consider resuming worship.
2. The Governor of New Jersey recommends that faith-based organizations may consider resuming worship.
3. The ELCA recommends that we may consider resuming worship.
4. The Bishop of the New Jersey Synod recommends that we may consider resuming worship.

In the spirit of reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission, this plan to resume indoor worship is consistent with the guidance and recommendations of the Federal and State governments as well as those of the ELCA and the NJ Synod regarding the safe conduct of worship. In addition, the plan will have been applied in practice to our church sanctuary and proposed worship service prior to 28 June 2020. Up to 50 people will be allowed in our sanctuary for worship (1 service leader, 1 service assistant/reader, 1 organist, 47 congregants) based on the Executive Orders from the Governor. Here is a summary of the two Executive Orders (Attachments 1 and 2):

Executive Order 152 and 153 specify -

1. No **indoor gathering** may take place in the State, whether on public or private property, **unless** it adheres to all of the following rules:
 - a. The number of individuals at the gathering shall be limited to 25% of the capacity of the room in which it takes place, but regardless of the capacity of the room, such limit shall never be larger than 50 persons or smaller than 10 persons;
 - b. All attendees at the gathering must wear face coverings at all times except where doing so would inhibit the individual's health or where the individual is under two years of age;
 - c. If there are individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering, those individuals must wear face coverings whenever feasible, and must wear face coverings whenever they are within six feet of another individual, except where doing so would inhibit the individual's health;
 - d. All attendees at the gathering are required to be six feet apart from other attendees at all times, excluding immediate family members, caretakers,

- household members, or romantic partners, as well as excluding a limited number of individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering;
- e. There may be no contact between attendees, excluding immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners, and excluding a limited number of individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering;
 - f. Where the number of individuals at the gathering is 10 persons or fewer, the gathering is not required to comply with Paragraphs 1(a)-(e) of this Order, but all individuals at the gathering should wear face coverings at all times, except where doing so would inhibit the individual's health or where the individual is under two years of age;
 - g. If there are individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering, they should, where applicable, demarcate six feet of spacing in the area of the gathering to demonstrate appropriate spacing for social distancing, such as through the placement of cones, flags, or other markings;
 - h. Any physical items, including equipment, may not be shared by multiple attendees of the same gathering except for immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners, unless such physical items are sanitized before and after use by different individuals; and
 - i. To the degree the gathering requires pre-payment, or seeks donations of any kind, contactless options for pre-payment or donation, such as online or by telephone, must be offered wherever feasible.
2. No **outdoor gathering** may take place in the State, whether on public or private property, **unless** it adheres to all of the following rules:
- a. The number of individuals at the gathering must be limited to 100 persons or fewer;
 - b. All attendees at the gathering are required to be six feet apart from other attendees at all times, excluding immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners, as well as excluding a limited number of individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering;
 - c. There may be no contact between attendees, excluding immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners, and excluding a limited number of individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering;
 - d. If there are individuals organizing or maintaining the gathering, they should, where applicable, demarcate six feet of spacing in the area of the gathering to demonstrate appropriate spacing for social distancing, such as through the placement of cones, flags, or other markings;
 - e. Any physical items, including equipment, may not be shared by multiple attendees of the same gathering except for immediate family members, caretakers, household members, or romantic partners, unless such physical items are sanitized before and after use by different individuals;
 - f. Where the number of individuals at the gathering is 25 persons or fewer, the gathering is not required to comply with Paragraphs 2(a)-(e) of this

Order. Where the outdoor gathering is a religious service or political activity, such as a protest, the gathering is not required to comply with Paragraphs 2(a)-(e) of this Order;

- g. Open-air rain tarps, tents, and other outdoor structures shall be allowed solely for the purpose of protecting against foul weather or for shade;
- h. All individuals at the gathering should wear face coverings at all times where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, in accordance with CDC recommendations, except where doing so would inhibit the individual's health or where the individual is under two years of age, and all attendees must wear such face coverings where required by another Executive Order; and
 - i. To the degree the gathering requires pre-payment, or seeks donations of any kind, contactless options for pre-payment or donation, such as online or by telephone, must be offered wherever feasible.
- 3. No individual shall be considered in calculating the total number of attendees at the outdoor gathering at any time in which that individual is in a vehicle, so long as that vehicle is either (1) closed, meaning that the windows, doors, sunroofs, and tops of the vehicle are all closed, or (2) more than six feet from any other vehicle or individual.
- 4. Nothing in this Order shall prevent an individual at a gathering from coming within six feet of another person, coming into contact with another person, going indoors, or leaving their vehicles, if done to protect their health or safety or the health or safety of another individual.
- 5. Nothing in this Order shall prevent a person at a gathering from momentarily removing their mask to place or receive an item in their mouth, including food or beverage, if done for religious purposes or for their health or safety.

In addition to the Executive Order above, the CDC prepared guidance and recommendations under the following headers (Attachment 3):

- A. Safety Actions – guidance for worshipers and church officials
- B. Monitoring and Preparing – guidance for church officials
- C. Closing – guidance for church officials

Safety Actions for worshipers include

- Stay home if you are ill
- Wash your hands, frequently
- Cover your face
- Maintain a social distance

Safety Actions for Sextons, Ushers, and the Safety Committee include:

- Plenty of hand soap
- Plenty of hand sanitizer
- Provide masks for those who need a mask
- Provide guidance for seating and flow to maintain social distancing
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces that can be in contact with worshipers
- Avoid using shared materials and worship instruments as well as physical contact between worshipers

Monitoring and Preparing Actions include:

- Reminder signs for the Safety Actions for worshipers
- Provide signs for seating and flow to maintain social distancing
- Remove hymnals, cards, pencils etc. from the sanctuary

Closing includes:

- Being prepared to close at a moment's notice if a known COVID-19 infected individual has been in the sanctuary after a cleaning and before a worship.

The ELCA (Attachment 4) has provided the following guidance topics:

- A. General Considerations
- B. Provisional Timeline

The ELCA recommendations include the CDC items and more. The ELCA under General Considerations recommends that no singing be performed during worship and offers caution for group recitation. The administration of communion should be designed to avoid any decrease in social distancing. The ELCA Provisional Timeline for resuming worship specifies the time when government allows 50 or more to be together indoors.

Bishop Bartholomew has recently issued two letters, one on 12 May (Attachment 5) and one on 22 May (Attachment 6). In the 12 May letter, the Bishop expressed support for the guidance from the ELCA and added that we need to be flexible, adaptive and response to current circumstances. In her letter of 22 May, the

Bishop warned congregations not to be too eager to resume indoor worship and to have a planning team to prepare for indoor worship at the proper time.

A reopening committee for Spruce Run was formed in May and included Gail DeRemer, Sara Armbrrecht, Rosemarie Adickes, Karen Smith, Mary Lomerson, and George Creasy. The Committee met on May 31st and June 7th to review and discuss the available guidance and recommendations. The Congregation Council and the Worship and Music Committee participated in a walk-through, inspection, and question and answer session prior to voting on this proposal.

The following changes will be implemented in support of the new worship recommendations:

1. Signs posted
 - a. "Exit Only" signs on exterior doors that are not to be used (lower door to the fellowship hall and front red doors)
 - b. "Enter Here" signs on exterior doors that are to be used (2 upper doors to/from the parking lots)
 - c. "Stop the Spread" signs in bathrooms to guide personal hygiene
 - d. "Stop the Spread" signs on entry doors
 - e. "Maintain Social Distance" signs on the floor at entry to building and sanctuary
 - f. Ropes on pew seats not to be used
 - g. Floor markings to facilitate social distancing along the hallways and interior walkways
2. Masks are to be worn during service by parishioners. A mask will be provided if a parishioner does not have one.
3. Soap and hand sanitizer gel available in the bathrooms
4. Hand sanitizer gel available at the entrance to the sanctuary from the lounge
5. Hand-held items removed from the sanctuary (no hymnals, cards, or pencils)
6. Collection plates are on tables at the front of the sanctuary but are not to be touched or carried. Collection should be mailed, donated on-line, or dropped into the stationary plate at worship.

7. The Sexton schedule is to clean and disinfect the sanctuary and lounge area prior to each worship service
8. There will be no singing or loud recitation. Hymns and recitations should be mouthed or whispered under the mask with minimal breathing. The organ will be played only during hymns. The remainder of the service will be spoken (softly).
9. Communion, when available, will be provided by presenting the wine and wafer in pre-filled disposable cups/papers that are prepared by a single masked and gloved altar attendant prior to the service. The pastor will commune themselves during the service, but parishioners will commune after worship as they exit the sanctuary. A disposal bin for communion refuse will be provided at the exit door of the sanctuary.
10. The Altar area behind the rail will be rearranged to limit use of the steps and to maximize the distance between the service leader and all others. Only the service leader will be behind the rail.
11. The service leader will sit behind the rail and use the large lectern behind the rail.
12. The service assistant will sit on the side in the choir area and use the small lectern which will be moved into the choir area (there will be no choir)
13. Seating has been marked to comply with recommended social distancing
14. Bulletins will contain the entire worship service including hymns and recitations and will be placed on available seats by a gloved attendant prior to the service and should be taken home after each service by the parishioner. Ushers will not "hand out" bulletins to worshipers.
15. Everyone who attends worship is asked to consider the following questions in order to help support as safe a worship environment as possible:
 - a. Are you ill with fever, chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing? (If yes please stay home and recover.)
 - b. In the past 14 days have you been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19? (If yes please take advantage of our on-line worship program and stay home for the full 14 days.)
 - c. Are you currently waiting for results from your own COVID-19 test? (If yes please take advantage of our on-line worship program and stay home until you know the result.)

- d. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days? (If yes please take advantage of our on-line worship program and wait a full 14 days before coming to worship in person.)
- e. Have you been in a high risk setting in the past 14 days (air travel, travel outside the US, etc.) if so please consider avoiding in person worship for 14 days and take advantage of our on-line worship program.

At the Congregation Council meeting on Thursday, June 18th this Reopening Plan was approved.