



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Dear Trinity Family,

The transition from summer to fall provides a natural opportunity to provide an update on ministries and plans for worship at Trinity. Communication is always important, but especially as we continue to navigate through this time of pandemic, when schedules are altered, face-to-face meetings are reduced, and information is not as readily accessed.

We continue to send weekly congregational emails and monthly newsletters. Please consult these for details about goings on at Trinity and phone the church office (717-263-8156) with questions about items that you see or don't see in them. Because it requires a team of folks to assemble, fold, and mail, and we are making every effort to limit contact hours in enclosed spaces, we started in the spring to send printed copies of the newsletter only to those without the ability to access it on our website (trinitylutheranchambersburg.org). We maintain a list of individuals and families to whom the newsletter is mailed, and have added names whenever we have been made aware of the need to do so. If you know of a member who cannot view the newsletter online and would like a hardcopy, please contact the office.

In June, we returned to in-person worship, but with reduced numbers for the sake of maintaining physical distance. We shortened the length of services, eliminated elements that invite physical contact, and restricted communion to the fourth Sunday of the month. I am glad to report that these efforts have been successful: to date, we are aware of no cases of COVID transmission within our building.

Although we are glad to be able to gather safely, we understand that many prefer to worship virtually until a vaccine for the virus or effective therapeutic medicines become widely available. To improve the consistency and quality of service streaming, we are upgrading our camera technology, adding a video control panel, and hardwiring audio and video connections. Thank you to everyone who has contributed financially to this project! Preliminary electrical work has been completed and space has been made in the sanctuary for the panel and other control components. We are now waiting on equipment to be delivered for the installation (our installer informs us that a couple of items are, not surprisingly, on backorder). Stay tuned!

Because many continue to worship remotely, in-person attendance has not taxed our reduced seating capacity in the sanctuary. In fact, on a couple of Sundays the service held at 11:30am has been empty. We have thus consulted with the worship committee and decided to move that service online. *Starting October 4, we will hold in-person worship on Sundays at 8:30am and 10:00am only.*

Besides the fact that there is no numeric need to offer a third in-person service, we will continue not to worship on Saturday evenings due to considerations of space and safety. The Neal Chapel, where the Saturday service has traditionally been held, offers a much more confined space than the sanctuary, lacks an exterior entrance (easy ability to traffic people in and out of the building without contact, and to recirculate air), and contains only "mini-splits" for heating and cooling. These devices do an excellent job moving air, which others have breathed, but they do not filter it well. (Anyone who has attended a Saturday service knows how quickly the chapel gets stuffy, even with only 20 or 30 people in it).

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So long as we are in a time of respiratory pandemic, council has thus determined that in-person worship will have to take place in the sanctuary, where our Neogothic architecture presents a vaulted ceiling and large volume of air, and multiple exterior entrances allow for easy, contact-free traffic flow (and air recirculation). Our hardworking sexton disinfects the space after each service. In order to minimize the need for extra cleanings, and to keep staff hours within set parameters, especially, again, when numbers do not require another service, we have determined for the time being not to hold worship on Saturday evenings.

I should say, also, that Christians transitioned to Sunday morning worship fairly early in the history of the church as a way of joining Christ in his victory over the grave on this day of resurrection. It's something that our liturgy consistently celebrates. For those whose work schedules or physical limitations prevent them from worshipping on Sundays, I hope that Trinity can again offer a Saturday service in the not-too-distant future. But I encourage all others either to join our livestream at 10 o'clock on Sunday or come to the sanctuary that morning and hear the Good News of God's light shattering the darkness of our diseased world. We have plenty of space!

Pastor Ruth, Pastor Arlyn, and I visit folks in the hospital and call members regularly, and make shortened, masked, in-person visits when they are welcome and allowed. Except for hospital visits, we do not presume to stop by unannounced or to visit on short notice as we might have previously, but please know that we are eager to give pastoral care. Do not hesitate to contact us if you would like a call or visit of some kind.

Finally, committees are meeting via Zoom and phone, and in person when protocols for safety permit it. These faithful folks maintain Trinity's building and devise creative ways of carrying out its ministries during these challenging days. For instance, witness and learning committees collaborated over a handful of online meetings to figure out how to create an educational space in our social hall for local students learning online this fall. Volunteers have come forward to make that ministry a reality, and we have had at least one regular participant. The worship committee started planning for Christmas services already last month. We are likely to offer four services on Christmas Eve, and our music director is researching resources that may allow us to bring in additional instruments and soloists, as we have done in the past. We look forward to sharing details as plans are finalized.

Our office manager keeps our website and our social media accounts updated. The Thursday morning Bible Study continues via Zoom. Pastor Arlyn posts written reflections on lectionary texts, and I record 5-6 minute topical videos every week or two ("What's on Tap with Pastor Aaron") to promote dialogue and provide an outlet for faith formation. Our resident scholar of the Old Testament, Pastor Spomer, and I just wrapped up a 5-week course on Genesis 1, entitled, "The Creator in a Broken Creation." Recordings of each session are available on our website.

In sum, Trinity has not slowed its efforts to minister in behalf of God's Kingdom. We are grateful for the ways that God has sustained us, and look forward to his ongoing provision in the coming months. Please do not let the physical distance imposed by the pandemic create interpersonal distance, but reach out and seek ways of being engaged with the work of your church and with one another. May God's Spirit of unity triumph especially now.

Pastor Aaron