



**123 East Blackwell Street
Dover, NJ**

COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan

Trinity Lutheran Plan

Trinity Lutheran Church (TLC) is committed to providing a safe and healthy facility for our staff, members, volunteers, and visitors. This plan was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure we implement strategies and procedures to preserve public health. It is expected that the entire church will have a role in implementing this plan to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 within our facility and our community that would result in a disruption to our mission. Therefore, all persons in our facility are expected to comply with all aspects of this plan. The church leadership and council have full support in enforcing the provisions of this policy.

This plan has been developed with church staff and members by reviewing policy, observing volunteer's in action, and listening to concerns. Guidance and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and State of New Jersey Executive Orders have been incorporated into the plan as appropriate including:

- Hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting;
- Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;
- Controls for social distancing;
- Housekeeping, including cleaning, disinfection and decontamination;
- Communications and training that will be provided to persons on-site; and
- Management/Supervision necessary to ensure effective implementation of the plan.

This preparedness and response plan assumes the following:

1. Trinity Lutheran Church (TLC) will follow guidance from the Governor Murphy, the New Jersey Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
2. Trinity Lutheran Church personnel will fall into different disease risk categories and decisions for return to the facility will be made in accordance with medical and public health guidance for risk stratification (e.g. age, health status). TLC's role is not to determine the risk level of individuals; rather the church leadership should ensure that individuals can make their own informed choices and be supported.
3. TLC personal and activities resumption will occur in a phased approach and comply with established guidance provided in this plan.
4. The COVID-19 situation will evolve and TLC will remain adaptable to the dynamic environment. The baseline level of risk for those working and using our facility will change as restaurants and retail businesses reopen, schools reopen, etc., requiring a reassessment of what level of resumption and precautions are appropriate.
5. Those functions that can practically stay at home to complete work will do so until TLC is fully opened to minimize large gatherings.
6. Social distancing, wearing of masks or other appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), hand-washing, and disinfection of surfaces are key factors to reducing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.
7. Personal responsibility is key to safe operations and the avoidance of disease transmission. Educational materials will be developed for staff, members, volunteers, and visitors to the TLC facility.

COVID-19 Plan Management

The Pastor and/or designee is the COVID-19 church coordinator. The Coordinator(s) are responsible for COVID-19 assessment and implementation of this plan along with the TLC Council.

Those working in the facility will be provided with this information and how to contact the coordinator with any COVID-19 concerns. Infection control and occupational safety and health plans will apply to anyone working in or visiting the church (e.g., all staff, members, volunteers and visitors).

- The church coordinator(s) and staff leadership are aware of and will follow all applicable regulations and public health agency guidelines.
 - <https://covid19.nj.gov/>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
 - <https://www.elca.org/Resources>
- Facility assessments to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies will be done periodically as part of sound occupational health and public health practice. This plan will be reviewed frequently to ensure effectiveness.

Facility Public Health Measures

Infection prevention measures are being implemented at our facility in accordance with public health guidance and best practices.

Handwashing

Anyone in the TLC facility is instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their time on-site, prior to any mealtimes, and after using the toilet. Hand-sanitizer dispensers (that use sanitizers of greater than 60% alcohol) are in place throughout the facility for ease of use.

- A “Clean Your Hands!” poster is located in all restrooms providing proper hand washing methods.
- In occupied areas, staff are checking and replenishing soap dispensers, paper towels, and hand sanitizer stations at a minimum of once per day, and more often in heavily trafficked public spaces.

Respiratory Etiquette

Everyone is asked to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve (elbow area) or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face—in particular their mouth, nose, and eyes—with their hands. Tissues should be disposed of in the trash and individuals should wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette reminders appear on posters and tissues and trash receptacles are readily available.

- The CDC “Stop the Spread of Germs” poster is posted in the main hallway.
- Tissues are in all common areas.
- All entering the building are expected to wear cloth face coverings (masks). Individuals may bring their own mask, or TLC will provide.
- When a sneeze is coming on, if there is time to quickly lower one’s mask, turning away from any people, and cover with a tissue and/or sleeve, this is acceptable. If

not, sneeze directly into the mask while still covering with one's sleeve.

Social Distancing

Everyone entering the facility is asked to practice 6 feet of social distancing on public health guidance and best practices. These measures may be adjusted according to phases of this preparedness and response plan.

Onsite Work

Staff, members, volunteers, and visitors will avoid gathering in groups and in confined areas where six feet separation cannot be maintained. Staff, members, volunteers, and visitors are required to wear masks at all times. Masks may be removed when staff is in their personal offices and where six feet of separation is feasible.

- In areas where shared workspace is in use, sanitizing wipes are available to clean prior to and after use. Wipes must be immediately disposed in the trash after use.
- Staff, members, volunteers, and visitors will avoid using anyone else's personal protective equipment, phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, offices, or other personal work tools and equipment.

Housekeeping

Regular housekeeping practices are being enhanced by TLC staff in accordance with [CDC guidance](#). Frequent cleaning and disinfecting will be conducted in shared spaces (e.g. Rooms 101, 102, Library) and high-touch areas (e.g. telephone, door handles, and railings).

- All cleaning products meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.
- If there is a confirmed positive Covid-19 case reported to TLC, the Pastor will coordinate cleaning and disinfecting of that individual's workspace.
- TLC Staff and Food Pantry Volunteers will clean public spaces such as building lobby, door handles, table surfaces, handrails, and elevator buttons at least once daily, and more frequently if deemed necessary.

Screening, Exposure, and Illness Policies

TLC will notify all staff and volunteers of screening protocols, self-monitoring guidelines, and policies for staff exposed or exhibiting symptoms. All COVID-19 related updates will be relayed to staff verbally or via email.

Staff members and volunteers should conduct self-monitoring for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms of the virus often include but are not limited to fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Information on COVID-19 signs and symptoms are available at the [CDC website](#).

Staff members and volunteers must report symptoms to the Pastor. Employees exhibiting symptoms should not come into the church.

- Report any exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals, respiratory symptoms, sore throat, or dry cough to the Pastor.
- If the employee or volunteer indicates any of these conditions, the Pastor may require that the employee/volunteer stay home, and that they should seek guidance from their healthcare provider.
- If an employee begins to exhibit symptoms at work, the employee/volunteer should

isolate in place and then be sent home.

Confirmed Cases

If a COVID-19 case is confirmed in a staff member/volunteer or in a member of their household, the staff member/volunteer will be asked to remain at home and considered to be in quarantine for no less than 14 days. A facility assessment will begin to determine what additional public health and cleaning measures should be implemented.

TLC will work with the Town and County Department of Health to inform staff members/volunteers if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in our facility, and the Town and County Department of Health will provide instructions regarding staff self-quarantine measures.

Consistent with compliance with the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), staff members/volunteers health status and health information will be protected.

Communications and Training

This preparedness and response plan is communicated with staff, members, and volunteers verbally and via email. Training is available to staff and persons using the facility by the Pastor or designee.

- Training
 - Topics should include but not limited to: Personal Protective Equipment, disinfection measures, social distancing protocol, COVID-19 signs and symptoms, self-monitoring practices, signage, and all other COVID-19-related safe workplace changes.

Facility Use

TLC serves as a gathering place for congregation and community members. Gathering purposes in the congregation include: congregational work, support to social justice missions, celebration events, community meeting, and social engagements. TLC's Food Pantry Procedures can be found in Appendix A. Use of the facility will be based on the phases of this plan and align with state guidance and policies. Faith Kitchen and Edna's Haven use the church facility and their procedures can also be found in Appendix A.

Any group that would like to use the facility while this plan is operational must request use using a Request for Facility Use form (Appendix B). Each request is reviewed by the TLC Council.

If approved, each group utilizing the facility will be required:

- Review training documentation provided by TLC
- Share TLC Facility rules with participants
 - Conduct appropriate social distancing
 - Wear masks
 - Wash hands
 - Cover your cough
- Take attendance to include name and contact information

No member of the congregation or community may use the facility until they have received approval from the TLC Council.

In-Person Worship

The Worship and Music Committee has made an assessment of the Sanctuary and what would be required for the safety of the congregation during this pandemic. Maintaining a six-foot physical distance between worshippers puts our maximum capacity at 24 people in the pews. Worship leaders and musicians sitting in their designated places are additional. This keeps us within the NJ State mandated capacity. Hymnals, prayer cards, communion cards, along with pens and pencils have been removed from the pews. The Plan for attending Sunday Worship is as follows:

1. To allow as many people as possible to come to church and receive the sacraments, we are asking members to join us in person only once a month.
2. Members should contact the church office to make a reservation for which Sunday they would like to attend. The Church Administrator will maintain a four-week rolling list.
3. All entering TLC must wear a mask at all time.
4. Everyone is required to sign the log book upon entry.
5. Ushers will seat members starting at the front of the nave and progressing to the rear. Members will very likely not be sitting in their usual spot. This keeps people from entering having to pass by those who are already seated.
6. At the Ushers direction, members will bring their offering forward as they come up for communion.
7. Communion will be done at the head of the aisle with disposable cups and waters. Members will receive the wafer then step aside before removing their mask to eat, taking the same precaution for the wine or grape juice.
8. To keep six-feet of physical distancing, only one person may use the bathroom at a time.
9. At the end of the service, the ushers will dismiss the congregation by rows to adhere to the six-foot physical distance rule. Members should then directly leave the building.
10. There will be NO coffee hour for the foreseeable future.
11. The entire nave will be sanitized after worship each week using SD VO a germicidal disinfectant by use of an electrostatic sprayer.

Parishioners will be advised that even with the safety measures in place, coming to church poses some risk. Whenever there is contact with others, there is a risk of infection. Parishioners must decide if the level of the risk presented by these measures is acceptable for them. The Sunday Service will continue to be livestreamed on YouTube even as we return to in-person worship.

Resources

Appendix C provides a list of resources to support the church's decisions and activities during the COVID19 pandemic.

Trinity Lutheran Church Phases

The purpose of this phase approach is to provide guidance and direction for activities at the church. The virus progression is imperfectly known and there may be times where TLC may need to move back and forth between phases.

External Conditions	Church Activities
Phase 0 - Hibernation	
<p>External Conditions: Cases presenting in the State with limited community spread and testing is limited.</p> <p>Criteria for phase: Government and organization leaders are initiating plans for social distancing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asses risk to staff and congregation • Meet with church council to determine facility hibernation plan • Cancel or postpone facility onsite activities • Plan for social distancing activities • Meet with staff and initiate plan for hibernation activities
Phase 1 – Stay at Home	
<p>External Conditions: Government orders for communities to stay at home. Virus spread is occurring in the community and hospitalizations are increasing. Testing is limited and there are widespread PPE shortages.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship services move to online delivery. • Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. • Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptism) are postponed and all participants notified. <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some staff will telework. • Staff may return to the facility to acquire equipment. • Bible studies and small groups will meet online.

Phase 2 - Sunrise

External Conditions:

There are declining case counts and availability of testing is increasing. Contact tracing is in place and PPE is available for social distancing purposes (e.g. cloth masks).

Criteria (for phase):

State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.

Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to the facility.

Church Activities

Worship

- Worship is held online.
- Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people.
- Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptisms) should be kept to less than 10 in attendance and be able to maintain social distancing. Approval is required.

Activities on-site

- Bible studies and small groups continue to meet online.
- Office functions are limited to ensure essential operations.
- Church councils and leadership teams of less than 10 might consider meeting in person while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, or continue meeting online.
- Facility users/renters may be allowed with approval and based on size and mission. Social distancing and public health measures will be enforced.

Phase 3 – Sunrise Plus	
<p>External Conditions: Government leaders continue relaxation of social distancing measures. Cases of COVID19 continue to decrease and testing is available. PPE is widely available.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.</p> <p>Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to the building.</p> <p>Church has the ability to gradually expand number of people in the church while maintaining social distancing.</p>	<p>Church Activities</p> <p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship is held online and in-person outdoors with social distancing measures implemented per local guidance. • Communion/Eucharist may be offered in alignment with public health guidance. • Group singing may be considered based on recommendations by public health authorities. • No-touch alternatives for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Do not re-use bulletins. • No fellowship/social hour will be scheduled during this phase. People are encouraged to leave the building after the service (no mingling). <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible studies and small groups meet in person while maintaining some online options for high risk individuals and those who do not feel comfortable being in public. Approval is required. • Office functions resume as normal, with attention to cleaning. • Groups, teams, and committees could meet in person. Approval is required. <p>High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff, volunteers, or program participants, should consider to continue to shelter in place during Phase 3.</p> <p>Social distancing and public health practices (e.g. wearing masks) will be implemented while at church and in community ministry, as is recommended in public spaces.</p>
Phase 4 – Normal Operations	
<p>External Conditions: There are none or minimal state restrictions. Vaccine available. Widespread testing and identification of new Covid-19 cases, with quarantining is occurring.</p> <p>Criteria for phase: None or minimal state restrictions.</p>	<p>Church Activities: Business as usual.</p>