

Dear People of Hope,

This has been a long, stressful season as we all wrestle with the implications and our best response to this worldwide health crisis. Our Church Council and pastoral leadership team have worked diligently to make the best decisions for our congregation. We deeply long for the day when we can all once again gather for worship and fellowship safely. In talking with members of Hope and church leaders across the region, it is clear the pandemic has taken a toll not only physically but emotionally, socially and spiritually. Even though God continues to change hearts and lives through our online worship and the wonder of technology that connects us virtually, some of us struggle with not being physically together.

In October, Governor Burgum adjusted Cass County to the Orange risk category recommending that large group gatherings be limited to 25% capacity not to exceed 50 people. In response, we shifted to online worship and online large group programming. Over the last few weeks, we have been having conversations with community leaders, Cass County Public Health and many medical professionals on the front lines of this battle. As we reviewed our practices and procedures with each group, all felt Hope has been exceptionally responsible and careful in our in-person gatherings. We also confirmed the 50 person limit on gathering size is a recommendation which, unlike the 25% of capacity guidance, does not take into consideration the size of our worshipping facilities.

In response to these conversations and discussions, our Church Council and pastoral leadership team voted unanimously to resume in-person worship and large group gatherings beginning Wednesday, November 18 with the following restrictions in place:

- CDC guidelines of mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing and sanitization will be required and strict cleaning protocols will be followed.
- All large group gatherings will be limited to 25% capacity of the space. Overflow spaces are readily available for worship, also limited to 25% of capacity.
- Prior to entrance clear signage will ask you some simple screening questions:
 - Have you been tested or come in contact with anyone who has tested positive or has a test pending for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
 - Do you have ONE of these symptoms:
 - A fever at or greater than 100.4
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Do you have TWO or more of these symptoms with new or worsening onset:

• Fatigue	• Cough	• Nausea
• Headache	• Shortness of breath	• Vomiting
• Muscle/Body aches	• Sore throat	• Diarrhea
• Chills	• Congestion/runny nose	• Abdominal pain
- **If you answered YES to any of these questions, you should NOT enter the building. You are welcome to return when your answer to all questions is NO.**
- Online worship, youth and adult programming options will be available.

Because we all have different risk factors and comfort levels, please take advantage of our online opportunities at fargohope.org if you determine that serves you best. If you are currently volunteering and are concerned about your health or safety in any way, please contact the church.

While we cannot eliminate all risk of transmission, the practices we have outlined above will greatly mitigate the risk. The safety and health of our congregation is of great concern which includes physical health as well as social, emotional and spiritual concerns. Providing in-person options that follow CDC guidelines as well as online options to worship, gather and connect are vital to the vibrant ministry of Hope Lutheran. The local church is the hope of the world—our ministry to help people know Jesus and grow in a relationship with Him is perhaps more important than ever. Engaging our congregation with multiple platforms and strategies is essential as we continue to seek to encourage all people to know the love of Christ. Thank you, People of Hope, for being part of this important ministry in these trying times.

God's Peace in Christ,
Pastor Paul