



Policies for Outdoor Worship during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Updated: 9/3/2020

Approved: 9/8/2020

The Outdoor Worship during Pandemic Policy has been established in the effort to promote safe use of the facilities and grounds of St. Mark's during a declared pandemic. The goal of this policy and its associated procedures and access conditions is to minimize the introduction and spread of COVID-19 among those engaged in and attending outdoor worship services.

The procedures and access conditions associated with this policy have been established to guide the church staff and leadership in operating the church and the congregants/visitors attending outdoor worship services in using appropriate precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The procedures and access conditions may be amended by the Executive Committee as conditions warrant and guidance from health officials evolve. Although churches are exempt from the relative State of North Carolina Executive Orders, these procedures and access conditions are intended to align with state orders, guidance from the ELCA and NC Synod of the ELCA and CDC guidance to support public health.

People who are at higher-risk of illness (per the [CDC definition](#)) are encouraged to stay home and connect with the church via phone, email, video conference, and recorded or live-streaming service.

The procedures and access conditions apply to all outdoor worship services during the Covid-19 pandemic. The operation of the opening of the office, preschool and any in-person worship activities are covered under separate documents.

Outdoor Worship Procedures and Access Conditions

- Outdoor worship services will be limited under NC Phase 2.5 guidelines to a total of 50 people per service, which includes all service support staff and volunteers.
- The church members/visitors need to pre-register by Sign Up Genius or with the church office to reserve a spot at worship service. Parishioners should only attend services for which they have signed up for.
- No member or visitor is allowed to participate in outdoor worship services if they are showing any symptoms related to COVID-19 - fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, a new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea
- No member or visitor is allowed to participate in outdoor worship services if they have tested positive for COVID-19 and have not been cleared by their physician
- No member or visitor is allowed to participate in worship if, within the past 14 days, they have been in prolonged, close contact (including living in the same household) with a person who is positive for COVID-19 or is a person under investigation.



Outdoor Worship Procedures and Access Conditions (cont'd)

- Before anyone enters the outdoor worship area, each individual will be asked to confirm the above criteria and must pass an on-site temperature check using an infrared thermometer. Body temperature must be below 100 degrees F to enter.
- All members and visitors age 11 and above are required to wear a mask which covers their nose and mouth upon entry to the outdoor worship area. Members and visitors are welcome to wear a suitable cloth mask of their own supply, or the church will provide a suitable mask.
- For the protection of all our church family, anyone who refuses to follow the above listed procedures and access conditions will be kindly asked to leave the church property.

The following additional procedures will be followed for the outdoor service:

- Members of the same household are welcome to gather and sit together. Household groups
- must maintain a distance of 6 or more feet between your household and others.
- Seating will be in designated areas that allow for six feet or more distancing between family groups. Ushers will help with seating to maintain physical distancing guidelines.
- Households should bring their own chairs/blankets to sit on during the service. Sun shades, tents, umbrellas, etc., may be used during and removed after the service.
- Social distancing must be observed. Hugs and handshakes are discouraged at this time.
- Hymnals and bibles from the church will not be shared at this time. Families may bring their bibles for their use. Paper bulletins will be available, if needed.
- Baskets will be available to place offering. Baskets will not be passed at this time.
- There is **No Nursery Care** at this time.

Containing the Spread of the Disease

An attendance record for each worship service will be maintained and photos will be taken of the gathering to assist with any potential contact tracing. If anyone develops COVID-19 symptoms within 14 days of attending a service, please inform the Church Office at 704-664-5474. The church Incident Response Coordinator will engage to document the case and proceed with the tracking process - communicating with the affected persons and informing those who may have come into contact. Personal privacy would be fully respected.



Cleaning & Sanitization

The church will provide an adequate supply of EPA-approved cleaners, hand sanitizer, soap, wipes and masks to support cleaning requirements.

Restrooms in the Family Life Center will be available during the outdoor service.

- Maximum number in a restroom at one time is three.
- Masks must be worn when using the restroom or entering any building
- Observe safe distancing markings to allow for six feet distancing at sinks and urinals.
- Use the available sanitizing wipes to clean surfaces touched entering the FLC or in the restroom.
- Wash hands thoroughly before exiting.
- Restrooms will be cleaned and sanitized between services.

Incident Response & Communication

- The church Incident Response Coordinator will ensure church incident response protocols are followed.
- The Incident Response Coordinator will manage and track all required church related communication and documentation between affected individuals and as required by county Health Department(s). The Incident Response Coordinator will maintain relative documentation and incident follow-through by the church.
- Anyone who becomes ill for any reason while on church property will be appropriately assisted, safely isolated and advised to seek medical care.
 - Any areas where a sick individual was involved will immediately be isolated until an appropriate professional cleaning can be performed. If a professional cleaning is not readily possible, [CDC recommendations](#) for cleaning will be coordinated by the Incident Response Coordinator.
 - The Incident Response Coordinator will follow up with affected employees/volunteers/attendees to determine if they show symptoms/test positive for COVID-19.
 - Any person having contact with a symptomatic individual while on church property will be asked to self-isolate and not come to church until the sick individual's status is confirmed.
- If a person notifies the church of a positive test result for COVID-19 within 14 days after attending an outdoor worship service, any person having contact with that individual while at church will be contacted and asked to self-isolate and not return to church property within the next 14 days.
- **The name(s) of any individual(s) with positive results will not be released by any representative of our church staff unless the Health Department requires such action be taken.**



Required Reading for Employees and Church Leaders

- [CDC – How to protect yourself and others](#)
- [CDC – COVID-19 Symptoms](#)
- [CDC - What to do if you are sick](#)
- [CDC – Reopening Guidance for Cleaning & Disinfecting](#)