

A Message Concerning COVID-19

I thought that title might get your attention. I don't like talking about the pandemic because all the conversation serves only to fuel the fear.

At this time, I just want to address the dangers of in-person worship service (who would have thought we'd ever have to use that adjective) from a more practical/historical perspective. You hear on the news the stories about 30 people who crowd into a choir room and COVID is spread, or on the scale of risk put out by the CDC, how going to an indoor religious event ranks in the moderate-high range. Well, I did an attendance survey for my Annual Pastor's Report to the members of Grace Lutheran Church. I know, we are a small church, and the risk rises as the number of attendees rise.

Before COVID-19

2019 Avg. weekly attendance – 41

Jan-March 8, 2020 Avg. weekly attendance – 39

Lockdown

During the seven weeks when people were not allowed to go to church, we continued to offer Communion. Precautions: 4 people at a time in 15-minute services; disposable individual cups; offering plate on pedestal in the Narthex; people stood or knelt at rail for entire service; Communion service on a laminated sheet of paper; all surfaces wiped down with disinfectant afterward; only enough elements brought out for each service. We served an average of 18 members each week, with a slight increase over time. **NO CASES OF COVID REPORTED.**

Recovery (gradual opening) May—July

25 people allowed per service; people had to reserve pews; assigned seating; four on a side at the rail; no touching; social distancing; hand sanitizer available; disposable individual cups; building regularly cleaned and disinfected. **NO OUTBREAK OF COVID REPORTED.**

Avg. weekly attendance – 35

Opened with restrictions—August through Present

Reservations not needed; social distancing, but no limits on numbers; masks required; hand sanitizer available; individual disposable cups; common cup made available; building regularly cleaned and sanitized. I was possibly expose(d), so I was tested, and services were suspended one week, until I got the negative results. **NO OUTBREAK OF COVID REPORTED.**

Avg. weekly attendance – 37

I just thought you should know that in-person worship may not be quite as dangerous as public opinion asserts. We will be having Christmas Eve (6:30PM) and Christmas Day (9:00AM) services.

Pr. Dale