

## A Response to Governor Pritzker's Lifting of State Restrictions on Churches

In a statement released on May 28, Governor Pritzker lifted the restrictions on churches related to the Covid-19 pandemic. We thank our Lord that the governor has reevaluated the role of churches in our communities and has taken this action. We continue to pray for him and all our elected officials and public health leaders, that our Lord would give them wisdom as they seek to lead us through this health crisis.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued a detailed guidelines report to assist churches in reopening. We recommend that congregational leaders carefully read this report along with our [NID reopen report](#) and the CDC report "Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith" to best determine how to reopen their churches for in-person worship.

The NID also encourages each congregation to be in touch with their insurance agencies for their input on coverage during reopening and to contact their local department of health representatives for their counsel.

We rejoice in how our Lord has allowed His Word and Sacraments to flourish even as our congregations have not been able to gather in-person as we are accustomed. We thank our Lord for our faithful pastors who have served under these trying circumstances, bearing much fruit of faith as they have served Christ's holy people and equipped them to be Christ-like witnesses in our communities.

As we now move to reopening houses of worship, we encourage member to extend patience and love to their pastors and congregational leaders. Some churches may not resume in-person services right away. Some churches will still host only online services for a time. With the notice of the governor's change in orders coming late on Thursday, some churches will not have had the time to adequately prepare their facilities for safe in-person services by this weekend. We would encourage clear and detailed communication between congregational leaders and members as each congregation determines when and how it will resume in-person worship.

Our Lord has answered our prayers. May His Word continue to not be bound (by disease, by restrictions, by our own failings) and have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people.

We will continue to monitor progress both on health and religious freedom issues on behalf of the church at large in conjunction with the Central and Southern Illinois Districts, especially as it relates to the 26 counties of the Northern Illinois District. We are grateful for the support and partnership of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.