



Northern Illinois District

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

COVID-19 Reopen Task Force Holy Week 2021 Supplement

As we prepare to journey with our Savior through the events of Holy Week, the NID COVID-19 Reopen Task Force deemed it advisable to issue this brief Holy Week 2021 supplemental report. We issue this to clarify a few questions that our NID office has received as congregations make ready for these Holy Days. It is our hope that this resource will assist in your preparations, and if you have further questions as you make ready for this coming week, please be in touch with our NID office.

CDC's Study on Physical Distancing

The CDC recently issued a report related to educational institutions. In this report it was suggested that physical distancing in schools could be reduced from six to three feet. This touched off questions regarding other institutions including churches. If physical distancing measures could be reduced by half in churches, would that mean that our seating capacity for Easter would be essentially doubled? In our understanding of the CDC's report, the following is to be noted:

- The CDC report studied schools specifically as the public seeks to reopen public schools across America.
- The report is not to be equally applied to other institutions.
- The reason this report is not to apply to places such as sanctuaries is because the data gathered was based on children only (who generally carry less virus, have different breathing radiuses, and generally project droplets a shorter distance than adults).
- The CDC is planning to gather more data related to more adult oriented institutions such as churches but has not issued that report at this time.

Determining Plans for Holy Week

While the CDC and the Illinois Dept. of Public Health have issued guidelines for houses of worship regarding the conducting of services, Illinois has left it to



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local health department representatives to determine the scope and limit of the IDPH's guidelines. If you have questions regarding what measures should be in place for your congregation through Holy Week, it is our task force's recommendation that you do the following:

- Contact your local health department officials to get their recommendations for social/physical distancing.
- Contact your insurance agent to determine if their guidelines/policies have changed or been updated to reflect any new measures related to Holy Week.

Seating Capacity for Services

- At this time, there has been no update regarding seating capacity that applies to churches.
- The IDPH would encourage churches to consider online worship services, and outdoor/drive-in services as safe alternatives to indoor services.
- Where indoor services are conducted CDC and IDPH strongly recommends limiting capacity so that six ft. distancing between worshipers of differing family groups can be maintained.
- Consider conducting specialized services for members who are over 65 or especially at risk.
- Consider increasing the number of services so that small groups can worship.
- Plan worship registration for each service so that your maximum seating capacity can be maintained. If there are unexpected guests, kindly ask them to wait until all registered worshipers are seated before determining their seating.
- Again, check with your local health dept. representatives regarding the maximum occupancy for your church campus for any one service.

Social Distancing Practices

It is still recommended that congregations follow all social distancing best practices when participating in Holy Week services

- Wearing masks are recommended throughout the service.
- Sharing of the peace, greeting one another, is to be conducted maintaining 6 ft. distance.



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- Have hand sanitizer readily available in several locations.
- Scan for temperatures before conducting worshipers into the service.
- Usher worshipers to and from their seats. [As Easter is likely to meet your capacity in worshipers, you will need to factor in more time between services to adequately conduct this practice.]
- Consider limited call and response and singing throughout the service.
- Consider a shortened worship time to limit exposure.
- Continue to have offerings gathered in a touch free manor.
- Utilize touch free methods of distributing Holy Communion.

Rejoice, Saints of God!

While the mitigations measures that are still in place may seem frustrating, they are a way of showing consideration, care, and love to our neighbor. None of these measures limit the joy that is ours as our Lord gathers us around His Word and Sacrament. As we gather, both in person and online, to witness Christ's love for us in the upper room, the garden, the judgment hall, the cross and the empty tomb, may the world around us witness again our humble gratitude for our Lord's passion and our joy in the victory of His resurrection! May your Holy Week and all your planning be attended by Jesus' grace and reflect His unfailing love!

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