

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Policy Area: Facilities

Subject: Safety

Revised: February 9, 2021



Infectious Diseases Policy – Version 1.6

“...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” – 2 Timothy 1:7

Gloria Dei desires to meet the spiritual needs of everyone who comes to church seeking worship, fellowship, and spiritual growth. While everyone is welcome, there are necessary precautions established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to minimize the risk of spreading communicable diseases.

Policy Context

This revision to our November 28 policy follows Governor Reynolds’ February 5 proclamation, which began effectively at 12:01 AM on February 7 and will remain in effect until 11:59PM on March 7, 2021. currently set to last until December 11. This revision follows an almost three-month decline in new cases in the state of Iowa. Two primary orders were given:

- Iowa residents are no longer required to wear masks. Residents with medical conditions and those over the age of 65 are “strongly encouraged” to limit activities outside their home. Those who are not at substantial risk should limit their interactions with those more susceptible to the virus.
- Indoor gatherings of 15 or more and outdoor gatherings of 30 or more are now allowed but event organizers are strongly encouraged to take reasonable measures to protect the health of their guests, as well as the public.

Although Governor Reynolds’ has lifted the mask mandate, we see prudence in continuing to emphasize the health of our members and those who use our building. At the same time, we also realize the need to relax some restrictions in a measured manner to allow members the option of worshipping without a mask if they should so choose.

Therefore, effective Sunday, February 14, we will be lifting the mask-mandate for our 10:30AM services, both in the sanctuary and the Family Life Center. We still strongly encourage the wearing of masks as a preventative measure, both for the individual and those within close proximity. Our intent is to maintain this policy until the end of the pandemic, or a very significant change occurs within the pandemic itself.

We continue to require masks for our Youth and Children ministries as social distancing becomes a much more difficult proposition within those age groups. Consequently, we are also not yet ready to reopen our nursery. We will continue to actively monitor the environment, including the impact of new variants.

Worship Precautions

In addition to the standard precautions, we have implemented the following precautions in order to prevent/slow the spread of communicable diseases, in particular, the coronavirus:

1. If you are ill, please stay home. You should not come to church until you are fever free for at least 24 hours without the help of fever-reducing medications. Many services and studies are available via livestream or recorded and posted on our website later. Per Iowa Department of Health guidelines, we cannot allow entry to anyone who is visibly ill or who has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
2. Social distancing practices should be used during outbreaks/peak illness times. This includes limiting exposure to other people and not hugging or shaking hands. We are encouraging all staff, members, and volunteers to greet each other without physical contact.
3. Hand sanitizer is available throughout the building on the walls via touchless dispensers or in pump bottles. Our sanitizer contains 70% alcohol, which is within CDC guidelines. Our bathroom soap is anti-bacterial. We recommend either washing hands or using sanitizer upon entering our facility.
4. Classrooms and other areas will be cleaned with disinfectant spray/wipes after each event, including door handles, pews, chairs, tables, water fountains, and check-in stations. We are increasing the frequency of our facility cleaning to ensure high-touch areas are consistently and thoroughly disinfected.
5. All individuals involved in food preparation and service will begin by thoroughly washing their hands. This includes worship assistants.
6. We have suspended the normal communion distribution and have moved our offering practice to placing money in the baskets at the entrance to the worship space.

Member and Visitor Precautions

We recommend, along with many others, that you personally *can* and *should* take simple preventive measures, as recommended by health officials:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, including your cell phone, using a regular household cleaning spray and wipe
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. Immediately discard the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- These tips are essential for every individual and particularly those in the highest-risk groups, i.e. adults over the age of 70 or those with pre-existing health conditions.

Weddings

Gloria Dei is a popular site for weddings and we want to be able to continue to host these celebrations in a safe and helpful way. The following guidelines will ensure that we can do that:

- Any social gathering/attendance limitations, guidelines or directives from the CDC or Governor must be strictly adhered to in the sanctuary/worship space. Furthermore, any attendance strictures (currently 150 or 1/3 of max capacity in our sanctuary) set forth by Gloria Dei must be adhered to as well. Exceptions can only be approved by the Senior Pastor or Executive Director.
- Guests are strongly encouraged to wear masks. If the wedding couple prefers that guests wear a mask, they may require such action. Separate households must socially distance six feet within the sanctuary/worship space.
- Furthermore, the wedding party, including the bride and groom, are not required to wear masks. We do continue to strongly encourage masks at all times with the exception of photos and the ceremony itself.
- Due to social distancing requirements and attendance limitations, we have the ability to livestream the wedding ceremony so others may view it remotely. If this option is desired by the wedding couple, the Worship Department will make the decision regarding its feasibility.
- Worship services should be “on screen” only and no paper handouts should be distributed.
- Until further notice, no wedding receptions can be held onsite.

Funerals

Funerals for our members are a difficult situation regardless of the surrounding circumstances. Funerals due to COVID-19 are far worse, and are perhaps, the saddest and most difficult part of this pandemic. People are often isolated from their hospitalized loved ones and do not have the ability to say goodbye as they die. Further complicating the situation, is the possibility that the remaining spouse and children may have been exposed and are now carriers with the likelihood of being contagious. This presents a unique problem for burials “from the church” as we call funerals. As such, we are putting the following guidelines in place:

- Any loved ones who may have been exposed to the deceased must test negative for the virus twice before being allowed to attend the funeral. If the loved one exposed or infected is immediate family, then the funeral itself must be postponed until that loved one tests negative for the virus twice.
- Any social gathering/attendance limitations, guidelines or directives from the CDC or Governor must be strictly adhered to in the sanctuary/worship space. Furthermore, any attendance strictures (currently 150 or 1/3 of max capacity in our sanctuary) set forth by Gloria Dei must be adhered to as well. Exceptions can only be approved by the Senior Pastor or Executive Director.
- Guests are strongly encouraged to wear masks. Separate households must socially distance six feet within the sanctuary/worship space.
- We are not currently requiring registrations for funeral attendees. If we believe a funeral may be very well attended, we reserve the right to make an exception.

- While we encourage families to make their funeral a complete worship service, musicians, technology assistants, volunteers, and employees, should be kept to the absolute minimum to accomplish that goal. Furthermore, the service itself should be reasonably limited in length.
- Worship services should be “on screen” only and no paper handouts should be distributed. The staff at Gloria Dei can transpose the “on screen” service to paper bulletins with keepsake covers for the family to have and hand out afterward.
- Until further notice, there can be no onsite funeral meals or receptions related to the funeral.

Other Events/Activities

We are once again allowing limited usage of our facility by members and outside groups. Guidelines include:

- Maximum occupancy of ten individuals in a single classroom. Masks are required for internal ministries and member groups and social distancing practices will be followed.
- Outside groups are strongly encouraged to wear masks. If any member of the group chooses to not wear a mask, they assume the risk and liability of such action. Again, social distancing practices will be followed.
- We ask individuals to touch as few surfaces/items as possible in order to limit the possibility of acquiring or disbursing COVID-19.

Privacy

- The church is sensitive to privacy interests and will share health information on a “need to know” basis. The church will also comply with any federal, state, or local law that requires reporting of health information to regulatory authorities and will otherwise release information as required by law.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” – John 14:27