

Old Zion Lutheran Church Philadelphia, PA



RESPONSE TO COVID-19 & REOPENING PROCEDURES

** Approved 6/21/2020 **

TABLE OF CONTENTS

History and Rationale for this document	3
Re-opening of the Church to in-person worship	4
<i>PHASE 1</i>	4
<i>PHASE 2</i>	4
<i>PHASE 3</i>	6
Changes to Worship Practices during re-opening	7
<i>Phase 1</i>	7
<i>Phase 2</i>	7
<i>Phase 3</i>	8
Cleaning of the Church and other Common Spaces	9
Decision-making process.....	10
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	11

History and Rationale for this document

On March 22nd, Old Zion held its last in-person service due to state and local guidelines to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Despite religious institutions being deemed “essential businesses” by the Governor’s plan, the Council and Ministry of Old Zion decided to move forward with cancelling in-person service to conform with recommendations from the state regarding the gathering of groups of people, and because the majority of the congregation is deemed to be people at “high-risk.”

Despite closing for in-person services, Old Zion Lutheran Church continued to provide a worship experience to members and the community by providing an abridged version of services that were streamed on Facebook and posted to our website. The website included a “Covid-19 Update” box on the homepage to inform the public of the current affairs of the church, as well as provide weekly updates of the service and propers to the congregation and those wishing to worship.

As the state of Pennsylvania begins to re-open through its three-phase process, the Council and Ministry of Old Zion Lutheran Church has decided to layout a specific plan of action regarding its own reopening process. In the “yellow” phase of the state plan, gatherings of more than 25 people will remain limited, and always must conform to social-distancing and cleaning guidelines that are recommended by the CDC. In the “green” phase, limits on gathering size are released further, however, the guidelines will remain in place. It should be noted here that while the plan listed below conforms with current state guidelines, the city of Philadelphia has increased some regulations. It should also be noted that it is up to the Church Council and Ministry to decide how Old Zion Lutheran Church will proceed through the re-opening and normalizing of church services, and it may not always coincide with state-level decision making; this is done to ensure the safety of all congregants of Old Zion based on our specific and local needs and concerns.

This document will describe how Old Zion plans to implement those guidelines in our worship.

Re-opening of the Church to in-person worship

PHASE 1

During Phase 1, there will be **no in-person worship**.

- Worship services will be filmed on a bi-weekly basis at the church with Pastor Metzger, JP Meyer, and Jaye Green and will feature an abridged form of service (3 hymns, Invocation, Readings, Sermon, Prayers, and Benediction).
- The church and areas used by this small group will be cleaned and disinfected between weeks.
- Pastor Metzger will continue to operate from his office and provide Pastoral Care to those who request it. Hospital and Nursing Home visits will be performed only if allowed by current guidelines and utilizing their regulations.
- Donations and/or Tithing can continue to be made via regular post mail or via the newly implemented online church giving portal (Tithe.ly).
- Space Rentals are not permitted except in special circumstances granted by the Council, and all adhering to local and state guidance.

PHASE 2

During Phase 2, in-person services may resume with the following limitations and guidelines:

- All people entering the church must confirm that they are not sick or suffering from any current symptoms of Covid-19. Congregants who are currently encountering these symptoms are encouraged to remain at home and/or seek guidance from a medical doctor. As of this writing, these symptoms include:
 - Fever or Chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue or muscle aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea

- Members are strongly encouraged to take their temperature prior to coming to church. Anyone with a temperature about 100°F should remain at home.
- A member of the Council will notate the names of all those present in the church to assist with contact tracing should a congregant receive a positive test within 1 week of attending church. Those congregants who are not members will be asked to provide a method of contact.
- All congregants will be required to wear a mask or face covering while inside the church building. Pastor Metzger will wear a mask except when performing the service, and the soloist will wear a mask except when singing.
- All congregants will be asked to maintain social distancing guidelines while in the Church and Fellowship hall, including:
 - No handshakes or other physical means of greeting
 - Maintaining six feet of separation
- Congregants may sit with family units. To assist with social distancing certain pews will be closed, and we ask that congregants not sit in closed pew areas. The Fellowship Hall will not be utilized, but bathrooms will remain available.
- No coffee or food will be served in the Fellowship Hall. Congregants may choose to bring in their own coffee/snacks, but are asked to keep them in the Fellowship Hall and not bring them into the church.
- Certain restrictions to the order of worship and rituals may be in effect (see Worship section).
- The service, though happening in person, will continue to be live-streamed via Facebook for those congregants not able to attend worship for any reason. The website will continue to be updated weekly.
- All common and used areas of the Church, Fellowship Hall, and bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected after service.
- Rentals are permitted, but are limited to small groups and parties must maintain the guidelines as noted above.

PHASE 3

During Phase 3, some restrictions are modified and relaxed:

- Congregants are still encouraged to remain home if they have a fever or any of the symptoms listed in Phase 2.
- The use of face-coverings and social distancing are strongly encouraged while in the church.
- Coffee and light refreshments are again available in the Fellowship Hall.
- The order of worship returns to normal, however, some restrictions to ritual may still exist.
- The English (or Combined Service) live-stream will feature only the Sermon, Prayer, Lord's Prayer, and Benediction. The website will continue to be updated.
- The cleaning of the church continues to be done every week after service.
- Rentals continue to be allowed, in line with the restrictions for Phase 3.

Changes to Worship Practices during re-opening

PHASE 1

As mentioned above, Phase 1 includes **ONLY** virtual services. These services are edited and include only the following portions of a regular service:

- 3 hymns
- Greeting, Invocation, and Announcements
- The Apostle's (or Nicene) Creed and Lord's Prayer
- 3 Readings
- Sermon
- General Prayer of the Church
- Benediction

PHASE 2

During Phase 2, as in-person services begin again, there will be restrictions both to the Order of Service as well as to rituals within the service:

- The order of service remains the same as in Phase 1 (abridged).
 - For Sunday's including Communion, we will use the Short Order of Public Confession, but not the full communion Liturgy (with the exception of the Exhortation and Words of Institution)
 - The Blood of Christ will be offered in individual glasses only
 - The Pastor will wear a mask and gloves while offering the Communion
 - To maintain social distancing, several "tables" may be necessary - we ask congregants to wait to be invited to the altar rail.
 - Congregants are asked to wear masks except when partaking of the elements.
- There will be no Choir. A soloist will be utilized to lead the Introit and singing of hymns.
- The service will be live-streamed for congregants not able to worship in person.

PHASE 3

During Phase 3, our Order of Service becomes more normalized, but some restrictions are still in place.

- The Order of Service returns to its normal length and includes all elements.
- The Blood of Christ will continue to be served in individual cups only.
- The Choir may begin to resume its normal schedule and activity.
- Only the Sermon, Prayer of the Church, Lord's Prayer, and Benediction will be streamed. The website will continue to be updated with all elements of the service included.

Cleaning of the Church and other Common Spaces

Old Zion Lutheran will continue to follow guidelines in terms of the regular cleaning and disinfecting of any used and common areas of the church building. These areas include, but may not be limited to:

- The Social Hall, Coffee Coral, and Kitchen
- Pastor's Office, General Office, and Children's Room
- The Ladies and Men's restrooms
- The Sanctuary (including Pews)
- The Altar Rail, Altar, Lectern, and Pulpit
- The Choir Area and Organ Area

Areas will be cleaned in accordance to CDC guidelines for facility cleaning, which can be referenced here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

The facility will be cleaned on a weekly basis. After services on Sunday a full cleaning will be carried out. On Saturday's, common areas and high use areas will be cleaned in advance of worship.

Members are encouraged to volunteer to assist with the cleaning. Please see Joan Wachlin for more information.

Decision-making process

The Council and Ministry of Old Zion Lutheran Church is committed to monitoring and following local and state guidance, and make decisions on the movement of the church through the re-opening plan. These decisions will be made in the interest of the safety and health of all congregants.

The Council will meet on as-needed basis to determine how to proceed. Any decisions made by the council will be noted on our Facebook page, Webpage, and via email to any member who wishes to receive it. Any announcement made will include the date of the expected change, and detail how those changes will affect worship practices.

In the event of a secondary outbreak, the Council may determine that in-person services may need to again be restricted. Any cancellation of services will be immediately noted on our social media sites, websites, and members will receive an email and/or phone call notifying them of the change.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: What should I do if I feel sick, or have been informed that I may have come in contact with someone who has or may have the coronavirus?

A: If you feel sick, please stay at home and follow worship via our social media sites. If you are informed that you may have been in contact with someone who has, or could possibly have, the coronavirus, please do not come to church! We will continue to provide online worship opportunities for those who cannot attend in-person services.

Q: What should I do if I wish to receive communion but cannot come to church?

A: Please contact Pastor Metzger by calling the church, and the appropriate Pastoral Care will be provided to you.

Q: What should I do if I come to church and then test positive for Covid-19?

A: If you come to church and are asymptomatic (not showing signs) and then are tested positive, please contact the Pastor or anyone on the Church Council. We will be keeping a list of those in attendance, and will make the appropriate contacts for contact tracing as required, keeping your information private, as per state guidelines.

Q: What can I expect if someone I know at the church tests positive for Covid-19?

A: If someone you know has been at church and tests positive or begins to feel sick, please encourage them to contact the Pastor or a Member of Council. The church will be cleaned weekly regardless of any signs of illness or positive tests. If a congregant receives a positive test result, any congregants in attendance with that person will be notified and urged to be tested. We will maintain attendance records in accordance with local and state guidelines and will provide that information to local authorities if requested for contact tracing.

Q: I am feeling fine and have no symptoms, but members of my household are members of a high-risk population and do not feel comfortable coming to church. Should I still attend?

A: The decision to attend church is completely on an individual basis, and we at Old Zion will not pressure any congregant to attend. If you care for or live with members of a high-risk population, we strongly encourage you to avoid mass gatherings (including church) as much as possible. Old Zion will continue to offer services online for quite some time, and Pastoral Care will remain available to all congregants.

Q: When will services “return to normal” at Old Zion Lutheran Church?

A: To put it plainly, we are not sure. This pandemic, and the reactions to it, have continued to be fluid and change frequently. What we are sure of is that the leadership of Old Zion Lutheran Church will continue to act in conformity to state and local guidelines, and will make decisions that we believe are in the best interest and for the safety of all congregants.

If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact the church by reaching out to us on Social Media, or by calling the Pastor at the church!