

St. Mark COVID-19 Strategy & Guidelines

Updated January 2021

1. Though the individual hours of our staff remain flexible, the official church office hours are every weekday from 9:00am to 1:00pm.
2. Small group size is determined by the current mitigation plan for social gatherings in Region 1 of the Restore Illinois plan, provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health. This size can vary from 0, 10, 25, or 50 with additional capacity limits of 25% and 50% respectively for the top two tiers. When allowed, leaders and attendees meeting in the building must follow the Small Group Guidelines outlined in this document.
3. Anyone who participates in activities, programs, or services must complete the waiver form, Participation During a Pandemic, available in the church office.
4. Sunday worship remains largely online, via live-stream on our YouTube channel. However, when social gatherings of at least 50 are allowed by Restore Illinois mitigations, worshippers will be able to attend the service in person.
 - a. For safety reasons, worship will be treated as a small group and must adhere to the Small Group Guidelines, which include prohibited physical contact and a required face mask at all times.
 - b. Singing and spoken corporate prayers will be kept to a minimum. Participants may sing softly, whisper prayers, or speak from their heart.
 - c. Communion is available to all worshippers, whether in person or at home. Home Communion kits are available at the church office. These include a small chalice and paten, as well as wine, grape juice, and wafers, so that the communion table at St. Mark may be extended into the homes of our unified worshippers.
 - d. When in-person worship is allowed, it will be limited 50 people, including leaders and volunteers. All who wish to attend must sign up in advance. Registration will be available by calling the office or by using the online form available on the website and the smartphone app. Repeat attendance will be limited based on the number of people who wish to attend.
5. Certain precautions have been put in place to ensure the safety of all who enter.
 - a. Though everyone is encouraged to bring their own mask, the church will provide disposable facemasks to anyone who may need one.
 - b. Hand sanitation stations will be placed throughout the building.
 - c. A professional zoom account will be available for use in the conference room to any small group leader who requests access.
 - d. Rooms that are not in use will be off-limits unless authorized by a member of staff.
 - e. After a space has been used by a small group, it will be thoroughly disinfected.
 - f. Attendance will be recorded at all gatherings.
6. Updates to our worship format will be clearly announced to the congregation, as will new protocols for small groups.

Guidelines for Small Groups

St. Mark Lutheran Church
Rockford, IL

As St. Mark resumes some Small Group activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the council has certain requirements for anyone who meets on church property. For the safety of all our members, and in keeping with our calling as Christians to love our neighbors, groups that meet on-site must follow these guidelines. Groups that meet off-site are strongly encouraged to follow these to the best of their ability. The health and welfare of our members and visitors is our number one priority in resuming all activities at St. Mark Lutheran Church. As it is determined to be safe enough, we will continue to gradually resume more of our “normal” church activities.

Small Group Leaders:

- Complete and submit the Participation During a Pandemic waiver.
- Schedule and coordinate gatherings through the office to ensure that there are no overlapping meetings during this time. Stay only in designated areas, and adhere to current capacity limits.
- Provide a virtual meeting option for those unable to attend in person. The church’s Zoom account is available upon request, and the office staff can assist you in setting up and coordinating a Zoom meeting. (other options include phone conference calls and other video calling services you are familiar with). Due to limitations, musical groups are exempt from this requirement and encouraged to come up with other creative means to include at-home participants.
- Take the temperature of all attendees upon arrival, or assign a volunteer to do so. Kindly, but firmly, ask anyone with a fever greater than 100°F to return home. A thermometer will be provided by the church office.
- Ensure that they and all attendees adhere to social distancing guidelines, as listed below.
- Keep an attendance record of all attendees and submit it to the church office.

Attendees:

- Complete and submit the Participation During a Pandemic waiver.
- Wear a face mask at all times. If a medical condition keeps you from doing so, please stay home for your own safety and take advantage of the virtual meeting option provided by the small group leader.
- Allow your temperature to be taken upon arrival. If you are experiencing any symptoms of illness, including a fever of 100°F or higher, you will be asked to return home.
- Refrain from handshakes, hugs, and all physical contact.
- Regularly wash or sanitize hands, especially after using the restroom or touching your face.
- Limit restroom capacity to one person at a time, unless with a family member or another individual under your care.
- Maintain a distance of 6 feet between yourself and others.