



Coronavirus Update: 20 May 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ at St. John's,

Tomorrow we mark the day of our Lord's ascension into heaven. There He sits at the right hand of the Father in the seat of all power. And there He pleads by His bloody wounds for the elect—for those chosen by God in eternity to be heirs of everlasting life and to be called to a living faith through Word and Sacrament. In other words, there, at the right hand of the Father, the Lord Christ pleads for *you*. In the present pandemic let us take comfort in that—that God's own Son and our Brother is our Mediator.

We write today to let you know that the elders, pastors, and other leaders of the congregation have adopted a plan to "re-open" in accord with the Governor's *Ad astra* plan.

Sunday Schedule. The schedule of Divine Services remains the same, but already on this Sunday, 24 May, we will be able to offer Divine Services capped at 15 faithful. If you were unable to find a slot in the Sunday offerings, please re-visit [SignUpGenius](#) to secure a spot for yourself and your family. On a "normal" Sunday, we'll now be able to accommodate 195-225 faithful (depending on whether one of our pastors will be at Christ).

Monday Schedule. The schedule of Divine Services on Mondays has been completely altered. We'll be maintaining two 10-person Divine Services, one at noon and one at 5:15 p.m. Simultaneous with the 10-person Divine Services we'll also have 15-person Divine Services, one at noon and one at 5:15 p.m. In all, our plan accommodates between 245 and 275 faithful per Sunday/Monday. We pray that you will find it useful.

We continue to observe all the precautions we observed earlier. Seats are set up to maintain social distancing, communion vessels continue to be carefully sanitized, the pastors wash their hands in Everclear just prior to the celebration of the Sacrament, glasses with Christ's Blood in the trays are appropriately spread apart, surfaces are sanitized between Divine Services, and ingress and egress to each of the spaces continues to be separate.

We take all these precautions following the guidance of the Scriptures themselves, as we have done from the beginning. :

- The 3rd Commandment—does our decision foster the piety of our congregation in gathering around God’s Word and Sacrament, the very means by which the Lord calls us to the faith and keeps us in it?
- The 4th Commandment—does our decision obey the authorities whom God Himself has appointed?
- The 5th Commandment—does our decision protect life and the physical well-being of our neighbor and take reasonable precaution to minimize and mitigate harm?

To date, by God’s grace, we have been able to maintain face-to-face Divine Services that comply with the Governor’s orders and use CDC-recommended precautions to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus, and we pray that the precautions we’ve adopted based upon the recommendation of the authorities will serve that end well.

Please receive this latest communication as an invitation to take advantage of one of the many at-church and at-home resources below.

IN-PERSON SERVICES

Services in groups of no more than 15 faithful at a time + the pastor + pianist & instrumentalists take place in the courtyard and the nave.

We ask the congregation to sign up to attend those services so that we can assure our brothers and sisters in Christ of gatherings of 15 or less. Register your attendance at stjohnlcmstopeka.org > [SignUpGenius](#) (upper right of the homepage). If you register for yourself *and an additional person* please make sure to give the total number in your party. You can also call us during normal business hours (M-Th, 8 AM - 5 PM) at 354.7132. *Please also indicate the number of communicants in your party.*

We encourage those with mobility issues to select a Courtyard Divine Service so that you can enter and exit at grade.

If you attempt to sign up for a service and are unable to do so, please let us know at church (secretary@stjlcms.org or 354.7132) so we can take steps to help you out.

Compelled by love for neighbor, if you have a reasonable suspicion that you may spread the virus or fear that you may contract it by attending church, please remain home.

“REGULAR” SCHEDULE—starts Sunday, 24 May

Sunday/Monday Divine Service. There will be up to 15 Divine Services each Sunday (depending on who’s preaching at Christ), but no fewer than 13. And additional 4 Divine Services (two 10-person services, and two 15-person services) will be held on Mondays at noon and 5:15 p.m. (except on Monday, 25 May, Memorial Day).

Private Communion. The pastors are willing to commune members who’d like to receive the Lord’s Body and Blood either at their home or here at church but are concerned about attending the 10-person Divine Services. These private communions will last no more than 10 minutes.

HOME RESOURCES

ST. JOHN'S VIDEO SERVICES

For the duration of the pandemic, video recordings of all “new” Divine Services and Offices will be mounted on the web on our Sermons page (stjohnlcmstopeka.org > Worship > Sermons = <https://www.stjohnlcmstopeka.org/worship/sermons/>). We make every effort to mount them as soon as possible. Please be patient with us as we edit them to make them as useful as possible and upload them to our YouTube channel.

HOME DEVOTIONS

On our [COVID-19](#) page you can find a [resource](#) we put together a few weeks ago for home devotions. We hope you'll make use of it. We also recognize that COVID-19 showed up in Shawnee County just as we were putting out the next installment of *Portals of Prayer* for April – June. If you're homebound for whatever reason and would like a copy, please contact us at the office and we'll send one your way.

GENERAL

As we strive to continue to provide pastoral care for the congregation through the ongoing gathering of the faithful around the Word preached and the Sacraments administered, as well as through our recommended home resources, we pray that you will all be kept firm and steadfast in the Faith and at last come to everlasting life. During this stressful and perilous time, keep your brothers and sisters in Christ in your prayers, along with our congregation, community, and the world. May the good Lord strengthen the faithful and bring those in error and unbelief to repentance and faith. Amen!

“For I am certain that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8.38-39)

For more information from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, check out the [COVID-19 resource page](#) at lcms.org.