



## Coronavirus Update: 4 November 2020

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

I'm writing with a threefold purpose. First, to share some news. Second, to share some information. Third, to dispel some rumors. I ask that you take the time read this entire communication carefully and invite questions and comments you might have.

### NEWS

In the last week we've had a couple coronavirus incidents. In the first incident a parishioner was here at St. John's in a small-group setting. The next day this person tested positive. Fortunately, proper precautions were being observed (masks, social distancing, etc.), and there have been no further impacts.

In another completely unrelated incident a staff member tested positive after exposure to someone outside of our congregation. A few days after the two had been in close proximity, the person outside our congregation tested positive. The staff member was informed of that exposure and got a test, which turned out positive.

The staff member in the second incident, prior to knowledge of the other person's positive test, attended staff meeting. At that meeting the staff was, for the most part, spread at a healthy distance. In one instance, however, the proximity was closer than 6' for more than 15 minutes (the CDC threshold for "exposure"). That staff member has since been tested—with a negative result—but will, per a [Shawnee County health order issued on 22 October 2020](#), remain in quarantine for 14 days. Out of an abundance of caution, the remainder of the staff have also been tested, all with negative results, or opted to take a 14-day quarantine.

### INFORMATION

The staff have, with the input of the lay leadership of our congregation, designed and adopted protocols for themselves to protect the congregation from contagion emanating from the staff. Our purpose throughout the pandemic has been to uphold the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Commandments, that is:

- (a) To maintain a vigorous and uninterrupted ministry of Word and Sacraments
- (b) To obey the governing authorities
- (c) To "help and be of service to our neighbor" in this physical need and not to "hurt or harm our neighbor in his body"

In pursuit of this, in addition to [the precautions for the Divine Service, Sunday School, and Catechesis](#) that you are all well aware of by now, we have, as mentioned, adopted protocols that govern ourselves, for your sake. You can find them posted in the office suite. A few highlights include:

- Monitoring for temps above 100.4F and possible C-19 symptoms—if a staff member has either, s/he cannot enter the building; this is a CDC recommendation

- Going on quarantine when positive or after exposure to a positive case at closer than 6' for more than 10 minutes; this is a CDC recommendation stiffened by the Shawnee County order of 22 October
- Wearing masks at all times except when entirely alone in one's office or another space in the building; per CDC guidelines

We are also going “above and beyond” — (this point becomes important for point three, below). In addition to following local mandates and CDC guidelines, we have also adopted a protocol for a situation in which a staff member has been outside the 6' radius of a C-19 positive person but within an enclosed space with that person for a longer period of time. You might imagine the scenario: a masked pastor working in his study behind closed doors with a masked penitent later discovered to be positive; the staff meeting for an hour and a half in a classroom with masks and social distancing, only to discover later that one of us is positive. In that situation, St. John's staff will:

- Either go on quarantine for 14 days; or
- Get tested

If the test is positive, the staff member goes on quarantine; if the test is negative, the staff member continues to work, as normal, though with extra vigilance over symptoms, including fever.

This what we did in respect to the two incidents above. We believe these recently adopted protocols coupled with our on-going measures will continue to make it safe for you to attend church.

### **DISPELLING RUMORS**

Some of you have heard that SJELC staff have been tested. This is true, as we mentioned above. All staff involved in both incidents have been tested.

However, the majority of these tests were sought *out of an abundance of caution, beyond what the CDC recommends or SNCO Health Department requires*. These tests do not mean an “automatic quarantine,” but only if there's a positive test. They do not mean that the staff was “exposed” in the sense meant by the CDC or the SNCO Health Department. We underwent the testing, rather, so that we, with confidence, could fulfill our God-given duty to you, without fear, to proclaim and teach God's Word and administer His Sacraments. We will continue to do so.

### **FINAL WORDS**

A promise

We will continue to operate with complete transparency, as we have from the start of the pandemic. If we have another case or SNCO-defined contact, we will inform the congregation. We will also inform the congregation of the specific steps we've taken to make sure that we don't come with contagion into your midst.

A request

As you have been doing all along (and as we have been praying for you), we continue to ask for your prayers, that the Lord would uphold us with His strength, bless the faithful ministry in our congregation to His glory and your edification, and preserve us all from plague and pandemic. Above all, continue to pray that our present circumstances not to drive any of Christ's baptized *from* Him, but *to* Him, who is our Helper, Defender and Savior, and whose victory over death and grave is set in the sharpest contrast especially when we find that “in the very midst of life snares of death surround us.” (LSB 755)