

Return to Stage 2 Strategy for Ministry Activities
Salem Covenant Church
November 25, 2020

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.
Matthew 25:40

The final parable in the Gospel of Matthew makes it clear that Jesus takes what we do and what we do not do for others, especially for those most vulnerable, very seriously. With that in mind and heart, Salem's Leadership Team and COVID-19 Management Team have been constantly monitoring the situation and seeking to make decisions and offer guidance that keeps Salem on our mission together—including the central aspect of our mission emphasizing that we love one another and our neighbors wisely and well.

Beginning with our Thanksgiving Eve Service on November 25, Salem will be returning to our Stage 2 Strategy for Ministry Activities. We do not take this step lightly. Indeed, we continue to long for and pray for the day when we will be able to safely return to full in-person ministry. At the moment, however, we must respond wisely to the rapid rise of COVID-19 infections in our state, to hospital ICU beds becoming filled, to the likelihood of increased spread of the virus in coming weeks due to holiday gatherings and, of course, to the ongoing encouragement from state and CDC officials to limit in-person activities. Fortunately, we are in a much better position to continue offering high quality, engaging worship, and discipleship experiences as we take this step given our recent investment in livestreaming equipment and staffing.

The Minnesota Health Department's guidelines state, "Large gatherings continue to present significant risk for increasing the spread of COVID-19." Further, state-mandated and/or suggested guidelines are becoming more restrictive, and most public schools and businesses that can do so have moved to virtual formats. Considering all this and especially our God-given command to care well for one another and our neighbors, our plan beginning at Thanksgiving and continuing, at least, through January 2021 includes:

Livestreaming of Traditional and Contemporary Worship Services

- **Sunday mornings:** Livestream of Traditional Service at 9:00 and Contemporary at 11:00 a.m.
- **Thanksgiving Eve:** Livestream of the service at 7:00 p.m.
- **Christmas Eve Services:** Livestream of Traditional Service at 2:30 and Contemporary at 4:00 p.m.
- Pastors, musicians, and others leading the livestreamed services will be onsite, but **there will be no in-person attendance** otherwise.
- Recordings of all livestreamed services and sermons will continue to be available online.

Building Use during the week will be available on a very limited basis. All groups that can meet virtually must do so with any requests for building use to be considered in collaboration with our COVID Management Team. Such requests may be directed to our facility calendar coordinator, Janice Zdrzil. We offer our gratitude in advance to all who enter the building for reading and following the guidelines. Any building use that does take place will be limited to certain times and areas to ensure adequate spacing, time between groups, and appropriate cleaning. In summary:

- **Please consult our website and weekly emails** for updates about specific ministries.
- **Salem groups that can meet virtually will do so.**
- **Groups meeting inside or outside our building will be kept to 10 people or less.**

Staff will continue to be encouraged to work from home except as necessary in keeping with Health Department guidelines stating that those who can work from home must do so. Pastor Alice will oversee the coordination of staff who may need to enter the church building for ministry work to minimize physical proximity with other staff and groups using the building.

With you in gratitude and faith,

Mark Pattie, Senior Pastor
Karla Walker, Church Chairperson