

March 17, 2021

An Important Update from the Cross of Glory COVID-19 Task Force

Dear Cross of Glory Congregation,

We are excited to share that Cross of Glory is able to move to Level 3 of our Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. This is due to Covid-19 case rates in Hennepin County consistently decreasing in recent weeks. As your COVID Task Force, we are hard at work preparing for this transition, which will begin on March 28 (Palm Sunday).

What are the biblical and theological values that guide our Covid-19 response?

- **We are called to love one another** not for our own sake but for theirs (John 13:34-35)
- **We are the body of Christ**, called to care for those who are most vulnerable (1 Cor 12:26)
- **We are a resurrection people**, called to see new life even in the midst of death" (Rom 8:24)
- **God is with us**, meaning while pandemic changes some of the ways we do church, it does not keep us from being the church (John 1:14)

What does Level 3 mean?

This means we will begin in-person services **starting Sunday, March 28th, 2021 at 9:30am**. While we are excited to be worshipping together in person again, the structure surrounding gathering will be somewhat different than before. We are asking everyone attending services to follow some careful procedures for the safety of the congregation (see the section "What will worship look like under Level 3?" later in this letter).

In addition to in-person services, we will continue to make services available on Zoom, on our website, and in print for people who cannot attend in person or who choose not to attend in person.

Level 3 also allows for meetings in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall (up to 50 people) during the week, while following our Building Entry Procedures (wearing masks, 6-foot distancing, etc.).

This will be a learning process – some of the following details may change in the coming weeks as we discover more about worshipping together under in these unusual COVID circumstances. We ask for your patience and understanding.

How can I worship during Level 3?

We are offering a variety of ways to take part in our worship life during Level 3:

- **In-person** - Safely-distanced gathering in the Sanctuary for services.
- **Zoom** - We will have services available "live" as they happen through Zoom, either at zoom.us or by telephone (see crossofglory.us for details or contact the church office).
- **Recorded services** - Recordings of services will continue to be available on the church website. However, since they will be recorded "live", they will be available online afterwards.
- **Printed bulletins** - Printed bulletins and sermons will be mailed to those who ask (contact the church office at 763-533-8602)

What will Holy Week look like this year?

Note: Only the Sunday Holy Week services will be in-person this year. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will be virtual.

- **Palm Sunday, March 28, 9:30am** - In-person worship.

- **Maundy Thursday, April 2, 7pm** - Virtual worship via Zoom. We are happy to welcome guest preacher Rev. Cheryl Mathison.
- **Good Friday, April 2, 7pm** - Virtual worship via Zoom. This will be a recorded service led by our Wildfire partner churches.
- **Easter, April 4, 8:30am & 10:30am** - In-person worship. We are welcoming a guest organist at both services.
- **April 11 and beyond, Sundays, 9:30am** - In-person worship, as long as COVID-19 case rates stay low, and vaccinations continue.

What will worship look like under Level 3?

Worship under Level 3 will feel different from pre-pandemic worship. We trust that the Spirit will continue to guide us as we learn how to worship in new ways under this level.

In order to safely gather together, we are asking all who attend in-person worship services to adhere to the following:

1. **Please come only if you are feeling healthy, have no COVID-19 symptoms and have not been exposed to someone with COVID-19.**
2. **Wear a face mask** - Everyone needs to wear a face mask covering their mouth and nose - before entering the building, while in the building, and while exiting. It can be removed once safely away from the building and safely away from others. If you do not have a mask, there will be some available at the church.
3. **Maintain 6-foot physical distance** - While in the parking lot, entering the building, while in the building and while leaving, please keep 6 feet away from others who are not in your household. This will be difficult since it means no hand shaking, no hugging, or other gestures that put you within 6 feet of others.
4. **Greeters** – You will be met at the door by Cross of Glory friends who will welcome you and provide information.
5. **Enter and exit through marked doors** - to avoid close contact while entering and exiting.
6. **Sanitize your hands** - Sanitizer will be available at several stations as you enter the building.
7. **Follow an usher to the sanctuary** - After you enter and sanitize your hands, you may follow an usher to your seat in the sanctuary. Seats will be filled from the front to the back - unfortunately, you will not be able to choose where you sit. Please be gracious and sit in the seats you are shown. It is possible your group may need to split up. Most seating in the sanctuary can accommodate two people. However, there are spots for groups of 3 or 4. Larger group seating may be available in the choir loft.
8. **Congregational Singing** - While there will be music in the service and possibly even song words on the screens (for the purpose of worship and for those participating virtually), we ask that you sing in your head and heart, instead of your voice, since congregational singing is considered a high-risk activity. There will be spoken congregational responses during the service.
9. **You will be ushered out of the sanctuary** - After the service, the congregation will be ushered out beginning at the back of the sanctuary. Please be patient, stay in place until prompted by an usher, maintain 6-foot physical distance from others not in your family.
10. **Offering** - Baskets will be available when entering and exiting the sanctuary. We will not be taking an offering in the sanctuary during the service. You may also give online through a link on our church website, crossofglory.us, or send or drop off a check to the church.
11. **Communion** - On communion Sundays (first Sunday of the month), we invite you to take a to-go communion kit following worship. These will be available outside of the sanctuary.
12. **Fellowship and Gathering** – The area outside of the sanctuary and near the church office will be for people traveling to and from the sanctuary. We ask that any visiting or gathering be done in the Fellowship Hall, since that area can safely have up to 50 people (with masks and 6-foot distancing). You are also encouraged to visit with others outdoors. Please maintain 6-foot physical distancing between family units, even outside.
13. **Bathrooms** - We are limiting bathrooms to an occupancy of 2 people at a time, with physical distancing.

Some Questions and Answers

I'm vaccinated. Do I need to follow the Level 3 restrictions (wearing a mask, no singing, etc.)?

We ask all who choose to take part in in-person worship and gatherings under Level 3 commit to our Building Entry Policy, a "Covenant of Care," for the sake of the shared health of our community. Additionally, the State of Minnesota has currently mandated that masks be worn by everyone attending worship services, regardless of vaccination status and that people maintain 6-foot physical distancing in services.

What do I do when I arrive at church for in-person worship?

Come to the main church entrance. Once you approach the building, you will be met by a greeter. Once inside, please sanitize your hands. You can then either follow an usher to the sanctuary or go to the Fellowship Hall until you are ready to go to the sanctuary. Please take your coat and belongings with you - the coat racks will not be available.

What time should I arrive?

Please arrive with plenty of time before the service, realizing it will take longer to get people in and out of the building with these procedures.

Will there be a fellowship time after the service?

While there will not be a fellowship time as we have known it after the service, the Fellowship Hall will be available for up to 50 people, while still wearing masks and keeping a 6-foot distance between family units. Food and drink will not be available. The safest place to visit with others will be outside – we encourage outdoor visiting since there is a limit to the number of people in the Fellowship Hall.

What accommodations will there be for those using Metro Mobility or with special physical needs?

Those using Metro Mobility will wait in the living room seating area in the Narthex instead of the building entrance. Greeters or ushers will help connect you with your ride when it arrives. If you have other special needs getting in and out of the building or to your seat, please contact a greeter or usher.

How long will Cross of Glory operate in Level 3?

The Hennepin County positive cases per 10,000 rate continues to guide our church community through the various phases of our Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. When this rate decreases below 10 for a consistent 2-week period, we will prepare to move into Level 4, allowing us to further ease restrictions. However, if the positive case rate per 10,000 rises over 20, we will return to Levels 2 or 1, which are more restrictive. As we continue to monitor local case rates, and as research continues to be made available about best practices, we will adapt our plan at the discretion of the Task Force. We will also monitor vaccination rates and data.

I'd like to have a meeting or gathering during the week at church. Can I do that?

While the state and synod are still encouraging meetings and gatherings that can happen remotely to take place virtually, you are welcome to meet or gather on-site under Level 3. Due to building ventilation considerations, meetings/gatherings of 50 and under are limited to the Sanctuary or Fellowship Hall areas at this time. Food and drink are not permitted under this level. Building use assumes you will sign in and out, wear masks over your nose and mouth, keep 6-foot distance between family units, sanitize your hands upon entering the building and sanitize tables/areas used (following Building Entry Procedures). Please call or email the office (office@crossofglory.us) to schedule any meetings/gatherings ahead of time.

Why is Cross of Glory limiting worship attendance under Level 3 if the state permits worship gatherings at 100% capacity?

Under current state guidelines, those participating in worship gatherings still must maintain a 6-foot distance. After measuring sanctuary seating, the Task Force has determined that a maximum of 121

people can be safely seated and sufficiently distanced in the sanctuary, with approximately 12 more in the choir loft. If necessary, in the future we may allow for overflow seating in the Fellowship Hall.

Where will staff be under Level 3? When will the church office be open?

The office will continue to be open Monday through Wednesday, 9 am to 3 pm. Staff will determine their own on-site schedules. Pastor Ali will continue to be available for pastoral care and conversation by phone and email, as well as some in-person gatherings. Since she is in a higher-risk category due to being pregnant and not yet vaccinated, Pastor Ali will make specific arrangements to meet with individuals and groups. Please reach out - she would love to connect with you!

Can my family arrange a funeral, baptism, or wedding under Level 3?

Yes - we would be honored to host your family for a special service. These services can take place under Level 3 with the same restrictions and guidelines as Sunday worship (limited sanctuary capacity, required masks, no singing, etc.). Please contact Pastor Ali to discuss further arrangements.

I need assistance signing up for a vaccination. Does the church have resources?

As part of our effort to care for the shared health of the body of Christ here at Cross of Glory, we are happy to help to connect you with vaccination resources or locate a vaccination site in or near Brooklyn Center. Please reach out to our Task Force for further assistance via the church office.

I have questions or concerns. Who can I talk to?

The Task Force will continue to share regular updates with the congregation. If you have further questions, we would be glad to hear from you. Please reach out to our Covid Task Force co-chairs, Mark Trease and Linda Knudsen, any other Task Force members, or refer to the complete Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Plan on our website (crossofglory.us). If you have pastoral care concerns, please reach out to Pastor Ali at atranvik@crossofglory.us.

We're happy to be worshipping together in person again soon!

We are excited to be able to make this long-awaited transition, even with the new protocols it will entail. Thanks to each one of you for doing your part as we prepare to make this transition safely and joyfully in the coming days.

Serving Christ and the Cross of Glory Congregation,
The COG COVID Task Force
Mark Trease, Linda Knudsen, Dawn Bailey, Lori Callier Balzer, Brenda Edstrom, Gayle Merritt, Pastor Ali Tranvik