



St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and School (LCMS)

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Matthew V. Moss, Pastor
Matthew P. Johnson, Pastor

"Learning and Living as God's Baptized Children"

Dear St. John's community,

Sunday, July 26, 2020

It is incumbent upon us as pastors to inform you about Governor Walz's latest Executive Order, 20-81, and what this means for your Church. The executive order applies to individuals as well as businesses and public spaces. The governor's office and Health Department of MN have made it clear that Places of Worship are not exempt from this order.

There are exceptions in the Executive Order for medical conditions and presenters:

"Individuals with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the individual to maintain a face covering... [and] children who are five years old and under". (section 8, "Exempt Individuals")

"When testifying, speaking, or performing in an indoor business or public indoor space, in situations or settings such as theaters, news conferences, legal proceedings, governmental meetings subject to the Open Meeting Law (Minnesota Statutes 2019, Chapter 13D), presentations, or lectures, provided that social distancing is always maintained. Face shields should be considered as an alternative in these situations. During practices or performances in an indoor business or indoor public space when a face covering cannot be used while playing a musical instrument, provided that social distancing is always maintained." (section 10, "Circumstances where mandatory face coverings may be temporarily removed", letters C. & D.)

These exemptions mean that your pastors can remove their masks to lead the Divine Service when meeting physical distance guidelines, as we have been doing. These also mean that you may see fellow members who cannot wear a mask for medical reasons. Please be mindful that they may wish to be present at church, but are not obligated to reveal why they are not wearing a mask.

Likewise, the pastors and Safety Team members of St. John's have no authority or ability to police who has legitimate exemptions. We cannot and will not ask for your reasons if you arrive without a mask. Do not worry about your medical or mental health privacy being invaded. We expect all the members of the Body of Christ to act in good faith and in accord with their conscience, so we will extend the same good faith toward you. Beyond our inability to *police* exemptions, St. John's pastors and volunteers also have no possible way of *enforcing* this mandate on members or visitors who choose to attend without obeying the Governor's mandate.

Our members will have differing views on the mask mandate. Some will see masks as a sign that we care about the weakest members of our community. Some will see masks as a sign of infringement on personal rights or the crossing of the line between Church and State. As fellow members of the Body of Christ we can step back and understand why each person has come to have the positions they have taken. We can respect those different positions and exercise Christian love for one another so that this issue does not become divisive for the Body of Christ.

[Finish with teaching on 2 Cor 3:17-18]

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Matthew V. Moss
Pastor Matthew P. Johnson
Council of Deacons