

**COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan for
Elim Lutheran Church
As of August 6, 2020**

Developed by: Elim Re-opening Team

Approved by: Scott Westphal, Senior Pastor; Joan Detzler, Council President

Elim Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy facility for our staff, members, and visitors. This plan was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to ensure we implement strategies and procedures to preserve public health. The entire congregation has a role in implementing this plan if we are to limit transmission of COVID-19 within our facility and our community. Therefore, all persons in our facility will be expected to comply with all aspects of this plan. The congregational leadership and council have full support in enforcing the provisions of this policy.

This plan has been developed with guidance and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Minnesota Department of Health, Saint Paul Area Synod and ELCA and Governor Walz's relevant Executive Orders have been incorporated into the plan as appropriate including:

- Hand hygiene, and wearing of masks and gloves when indicated;
- Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;
- Controls for social distancing;
- Housekeeping, including cleaning, disinfection and decontamination;
- Communications and training that will be provided to persons on-site; and
- Management and supervision necessary to ensure effective implementation of the plan.

This preparedness and response plan assumes the following:

1. Elim will follow guidance from the Minnesota Governor, Minnesota Department of Health, Saint Paul Area Synod, and ELCA.
2. Elim personnel will fall into different disease risk categories and decisions for return to the facility will be made in accordance with medical and public health guidance for risk stratification (e.g. age, health status). Elim's role is not to determine the risk level of individuals; rather the church leadership should ensure that individuals can make their own informed choices and be supported.
3. Elim staffing and activities resumption will occur in a phased approach and comply with established guidance provided in this plan.
4. The COVID19 situation will evolve and Elim is committed to adapting within this dynamic environment. The baseline level of risk for those working and using our facility will change as restaurants, retail businesses, schools, etc. reopen, requiring a reassessment of what level of resumption and precautions are appropriate.
5. Those functions that can be successfully completed while staying at home will continue until Elim is fully opened.
6. Social distancing, wearing of masks or other appropriate PPE, hand-washing, and disinfection of surfaces are key factors to reducing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.
7. Large gatherings are unlikely to be safe for some time. Worship services, and other large gatherings should be carried out online.
8. Personal responsibility is key to safe operations and the avoidance of disease transmission. Educational materials will be developed for staff, members, and visitors to Elim's facility.

COVID-19 Plan Management

The COVID -19 church coordinator(s) are the Senior Pastor and the Council President and they are responsible for COVID-19 assessment and implementation of this plan with the Advisory Team. All staff in the facility will be provided with the coordinator's name and how to contact the coordinator with any COVID-19 concerns via phone or email. Infection control and occupational safety and health plans will apply to anyone working in or visiting the church (e.g., all staff, members, and visitors).

- The church coordinator(s) and staff leadership are aware of and will follow all applicable regulations and public health agency guidelines.
 - Federal guidelines: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - State guidelines: Minnesota Department of Health
- Facility assessments to identify COVID-19 risks and prevention strategies should be done periodically as part of sound occupational health and public health practice. This plan will be reviewed every 30 days to ensure effectiveness.

Facility Public Health Measures

Infection prevention measures are being implemented at our facility in accordance with public health guidance and best practices.

Handwashing

Anyone in the Elim facility is instructed to wash their hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water throughout the day. Specific attention to be given at the beginning and end of their time on-site, prior to any mealtimes, and after using the toilet. If soap and water washing is not available, hand-sanitizer (with greater than 60% ethyl alcohol) can be used as long as hands are not visibly soiled. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be located at the main entrance to the sanctuary, in the sacristy, in the hallway outside fellowship hall, in the hallway by the foodshelf/AA meeting/pre-school and inside the lower level parking lot entrance.

- A "Clean Your Hands!" poster is located in all restrooms providing proper hand washing methods. Posters are available from CDC and state departments of health.
- In occupied areas, custodial staff are checking and replenishing soap dispensers, paper towels, and hand sanitizer stations at a minimum of once per day, and more often in heavily trafficked public spaces

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

Everyone is asked to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face—in particular their mouth, nose, and eyes—with their hands. Tissues should be disposed of in the trash and individuals should wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette reminders appear on posters and tissues and trash receptacles are readily available.

- The CDC "Stop the Spread of Germs" posters are posted in all building lobbies and other common areas.
- Tissues in common areas.
- Employees are expected to wear cloth face coverings (masks) in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Individuals may bring their own mask, or Elim may order them for staff.

Social distancing

Everyone entering the facility is asked to practice social distancing based on public health guidance and best practices. These measures may be adjusted according to phases of this preparedness and response plan.

Remote Work and Adjusted Onsite Hours

Elim has implemented the following procedures and practices for remote work and adjusted hours. All staff will meet with their supervisor to determine an individual plan for work location based on responsibilities and risk levels.

- Remote work is approved and expected for all persons who can accomplish their primary duty functions from home.
- Staff are provided guidance and training to work remotely. Elim's COVID-19 coordinators will assign trainers appropriate to the task of training staff to work remotely.
- Equipment is available for staff members to complete their assigned responsibilities and tasks. Equipment questions should be directed to Elim's COVID-19 coordinators.
- Flexible hours and staggered shifts are available to minimize the number of persons in the facility at one time. Requests and approval for flexible hours and staggered shifts will be handled by the Senior Pastor.

Onsite Work

Staff, members, and visitors will avoid gathering in groups and in confined areas where six feet separation cannot be maintained. Staff, members and visitors are required to wear masks at all times. Masks may be removed when staff are in their personal offices and where six feet of separation is feasible.

- Shared staff offices are assessed and where feasible staff are reassigned to other working areas or alternate hours to maintain social distancing. In the front office and accounting office, the Financial Secretary will be in on Mondays and Wednesdays, the Treasurer on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the Parish Secretary on Fridays.
- In areas where shared workspace is in use, sanitizing wipes are available to clean prior to and after use. Wipes must be immediately disposed of in the trash after use.
- Staff will avoid using anyone else's personal protective equipment, phones, computer equipment, desks, cubicles, workstations, offices, or other personal work tools and equipment.
- Common spaces such as break rooms, study spaces and conference rooms are to be arranged to promote social distancing.
- Where possible, internal doors will be left open during working hours to minimize doorknob contact, including offices, conference room, chapel, nursery, fellowship hall, bathrooms and classrooms.

Housekeeping

Regular housekeeping practices are being enhanced by Elim staff in accordance with CDC guidance. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting will be conducted in shared spaces (e.g. break rooms) and high-touch areas (e.g. door handles, railings).

- All custodial staff and their supervisors are provided refresher training on proper cleaning techniques, as well as background information on COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/documents/316485-c_reopeningamerica_guidance_4.19_6pm.pdf
- All cleaning products meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.
- If there is a confirmed positive case reported to Elim, the COVID-19 coordinators will coordinate cleaning and disinfecting of that individual's work space.
- Custodian will clean public spaces such as lobbies, restrooms, door handles, handrails, and elevator buttons at least once daily, and more frequently if deemed necessary.

Screening, Exposure, and Illness Policies

Elim will notify all staff of screening protocols, self-monitoring guidelines, and policies for staff exposed or exhibiting symptoms via email. All COVID-19 related updates will be communicated to staff via email within 24 hours of the update.

Elim has leave policies that encourage staff to stay at home when they are sick, when household members are sick, or when they are required by a healthcare provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household.

Questions on leave policies should be directed to Elim's Personnel Policy Manual or the Personnel Committee.

Employee Self-Screening for those Working On-Site

Staff members should conduct self-monitoring for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms of the virus often include but are not limited to fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Information on COVID-19 signs and symptoms are available at the CDC website.

Staff must report symptoms to the COVID-19 coordinators. Employees exhibiting symptoms should not come into the church.

- Take your temperature in the morning and when you return home from work. Log those results and report any fever to your supervisor.
- Report any exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals, respiratory symptoms, sore throat, or dry cough to your supervisor.
- If the employee indicates any of these conditions, the supervisor may require that the employee stay home, and the employee should seek guidance from their healthcare provider.

If an employee begins to exhibit symptoms while at work, the employee shall notify the Senior Pastor by telephone or intercom and isolate in his/her workspace to avoid shedding virus to other parts of the church and shall be sent home.

Confirmed Cases

If a COVID-19 case is confirmed in a staff member or in a member of their household, the staff member will be asked to remain at home and considered to be in quarantine for no less than 14 days. A facility assessment will begin to determine what additional public health and cleaning measures should be implemented.

Elim will work with the MN Department of Health to inform staff members if they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in our facility, and the MN Department of Health will provide instructions regarding staff self-quarantine measures.

Communications and Training

This preparedness and response plan is communicated with staff and members of the congregation via the Elim website and printed copies will be available in the church office. Training is available to staff and persons using the facility.

Training will consist of printed materials and videos (if available) Topics will include but are not limited to:

- Personal Protective Equipment,
- disinfection measures
- social distancing protocol
- COVID-19 signs and symptoms information
- return-to-work policies
- self-monitoring practices
- signage
- enhanced cleaning

Facility Use

Elim serves as a gathering place for congregation and community members. Gathering purposes in the congregation include: congregational work, support to social justice missions, celebration events, community meetings, and social engagements. Use of the facility will be based on the phases of this plan and align with state guidance and policies. Priority will be given to mission related activities.

Any group that would like to use the facility while this plan is operational must make a request using the Request for Facility Use form (Appendix A). Each request will be reviewed by an internal committee designated by church leadership.

If approved, each group utilizing the facility will be required to:

- Review training provided by Elim
- Share Elim facility rules with participants
- Conduct appropriate social distancing
- Wear masks
- Wash hands
- Cover your cough
- Take attendance to include name and contact information

No member of the congregation or community may use the facility until they have received approval from the Senior Pastor and Council President.

The Elim Church Council has approved use of the facility by Scandia Preschool. The preschool has developed a separate COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. For more information, check the [Scandia Preschool website](#).

Appendix B provides a list of resources to support the church's decisions and activities during the COVID19 pandemic.

Elim Lutheran Church Phases

The purpose of this phase approach is to provide guidance and direction for activities at the church. The disease progression is imperfectly known and there may be times where Elim may need to move back and forth between phases. [Describe phases, criteria for phase, and church activities. Phases and content in the table below is provided as an example. Churches should adjust accordingly based on state guidance, association/affiliation guidance, and local circumstances].

Phase	External Conditions	Church Activities
0	Cases presenting in the state with limited community spread and testing is limited. Criteria (for phase): Government and organization leaders are initiating plans for social distancing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess risk to staff and congregation. • Meet with congregational council to determine facility hibernation plan. • Cancel or postpone facility onsite activities. • Plan for social distancing activities. • Meet with staff and initiate plan for hibernation activities.
1	Government Orders for communities to stay at home. Disease spread is occurring in the community and hospitalization is increasing. Testing is limited and there are widespread PPE shortages.	<p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship services move to online delivery. • Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. • Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptism) are postponed

Phase	External Conditions	Church Activities
	<p>Criteria (for phase): Government issues to stay at home orders.</p>	<p>and all participants notified.</p> <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Elim staff will work remotely . • Staff may return to the facility to acquire equipment and record worship segments. • Bible studies and small groups will meet online.
2	<p>There are declining case counts and availability of testing is increasing. Contact tracing is in place and PPE is available for social distancing purposes (e.g. cloth masks).</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.</p> <p>Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to the facility.</p>	<p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship is held online. • Recording in the sanctuary is limited to critical elements of worship, while maintaining at least 6 ft of space between people. • Life celebrations (weddings, funerals, baptisms) will not be held inside the church. Graveside funeral services are permitted but should be kept to less than 25 in attendance and be able to maintain social distancing. Masks are strongly advised. Approval is required. <p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible studies and small groups continue to meet online. • Office functions are limited to ensure essential operations. • Congregation councils and leadership teams of less than 10 might consider meeting in person while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, or continue meeting online. • Facility users/renters may be allowed with approval and based on size and mission. Social distancing and public health measures will be enforced.
3	<p>Government leaders continue relaxation of social distancing measures. Cases of COVID19 continue to decrease and testing is available. PPE is widely available.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): State provides relaxed guidance for social distancing.</p> <p>Facilities and core services staff have adequately prepared for return to campus.</p> <p>Congregation has the ability to gradually expand the number of people in the building while maintaining social distancing.</p>	<p>Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship is held online and in-person with social distancing measures implemented per local guidance. Multiple services may be considered to spread out participation. • Entrance and exit into the church will be designed to avoid gathering. • Communion/Eucharist may be offered in alignment with public health guidance. Consultation with church association/affiliation authorities will occur prior to offering. • Group singing may be considered based on recommendations by public health authorities. • No-touch alternatives for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Consider removing prayer books and Bibles if you will have multiple services. Use bulletins (do not reuse) or screens as alternatives. • No fellowship/social hour will be scheduled during this phase. People are encouraged to leave the building after the service (no mingling).

Phase	External Conditions	Church Activities
		<p>Activities on-site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bible studies and small groups meet in person while maintaining some online options for high risk individuals and those who do not feel comfortable being in public. Approval is required. Office functions continue remotely. Groups, teams, and committees could meet in person. Approval is required. <p>High risk individuals (people over 60 and those with underlying conditions), whether staff, volunteers, or program participants, should continue to shelter in place during Phase 3.</p> <p>Social distancing and public health practices (e.g. wearing masks) will be implemented while at church and in community ministry, as is recommended in public spaces.</p>
4	<p>There are no or minimal state restrictions. Vaccine available. Widespread testing and identification of new COVID-19 cases, with quarantining is occurring.</p> <p>Criteria (for phase): No or minimal state restrictions.</p>	Business as usual.

Elim Activities Chart

	Phase 0	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Worship Services	Online	Online	Online	In person with social distancing	Normal
Students	Online	Online	Online	Online	Normal
Ministry Events	Online	Online	Online	In person with social distancing	Normal
Office Staff	Remote	Remote	Remote/ Onsite with social distancing	Remote/Onsite with social distancing	Normal
Community Groups	Online/ Postponed	Online/ Postponed	Online/Postponed	In person with permission	Normal
Life Celebrations	Postponed	Postponed	Postponed	In person with permission/limits	Normal

Worship

We have never stopped worshipping. It is Elim's intention to re-open for worship services and other uses of the church facilities and grounds in a series of phases. This document currently addresses only Phases 1-3 of this re-opening. It is the intention of the COVID-19 Plan committee to meet regularly to discuss potential modifications to Phase 1-3 and any future phases.

Phase 3 - Outdoor Worship alongside Online Worship Services

Online Worship Services

Worship services will continue to be recorded for online worship opportunities for all who are interested. Viewing the recorded service is still the best option if you are compromised, vulnerable or feeling unsafe attending a worship service in person. Elim is committed to continuing to provide recorded services indefinitely, and wants all to know that it is a great option for worship in these challenging times.

Outdoor Worship Services

Outdoor Sunday worship services will be held on the Gammelgarden lawn beginning July 18th, 2020 at 9:00am and each Sunday thereafter, until further notice. As always, everyone is welcome. In the event of rain or inclement weather, worshippers should stay home and use the online service if available to them.

Outdoor Service Public Health Measures

Elim expects compliance with the following procedures for all worshippers at the outdoor services:

- **Masks:** All worshippers will be required to wear masks at all times on before, during and after services while on the grounds of the church. If a worshiper does not have a mask, elim will have a limited supply to offer. The worship team, because they will be physically distant by at least 6-12 feet from the congregation during worship, will not be required to wear a mask while at the front of the worship. Flags will be placed in the ground to help worshippers identify the distance needed.
- **Hospitality Teams:** All members of the hospitality teams will be required to wear masks at all times but will also sign off on a form confirming they do not have symptoms associated with Covid-19 as set forth below. All worshippers will need to check in at the hospitality table with their phone number.
- **Symptoms:** if a person is experiencing any of the following symptoms, they should not attend an outdoor worship service:
 - Fever over 100 degrees
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chills
 - Headache
 - Muscle pain
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
- **Seating:** Families will be seated together in areas marked off and separated from other worshippers at a distance of at least 6 feet from other families.
- **Chairs:** All worshippers will bring their own chairs to sit on during the worship services.
- **Communion:** Elim has a limited supply of individually packaged communion available, but worshippers may bring their own supplies.
- **Offering:** No touch alternative for making an offering will be provided.
- **Fellowship/coffee hour:** No fellowship or social hour will be offered before and after the service. In the spirit of loving our neighbor, all are encouraged to leave the promises upon conclusion of the service.
- **Restrooms:** A portable toilet is available in the Gammelgarden Museum parking lot for use before, during, and after the service. Restrooms within the main building will not be available for use.
- **Handwashing:** all are instructed to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not readily available. Hand sanitizer will be available at the hospitality table when checking in for service.

Appendix A – Request for Facility Use

Elim’s priority continues to be the health and safety of all members of our community. However, we also recognize that our facility supports the missions of our congregation and our community. Consistent with Minnesota orders and public health advice, this form will enable congregational leadership to identify who might be permitted back to use the facility, starting first with groups who support essential congregational and social justice missions for our congregation and community.

For everyone’s safety, the congregation’s intent is to slowly and gradually invite groups back. Decisions for facility use will be based on phases of the Elim preparedness and response plan. To facilitate approval for use of our facility, please provide the information requested below and submit it to the Elim Church Office.

Requestor Name	Requestor Phone Number
Name of Group	Size of Group
Gathering is: <input type="checkbox"/> One Time <input type="checkbox"/> Recurring Describe Frequency (e.g., weekly) _____	Date(s) for gathering
Provide a brief summary of the gathering and why it must be done on-site or at another location away from your home.	
Elim will provide guidance for use of the facility. Describe the precautions you will take to ensure your health and safety and the health and safety of those who will participate in the gathering. (methods and means for social distancing, PPE, etc.)	

- Elim requires that the group leader keep a list of the names and contact information of all members of the group. The purpose of this list is to be able to contact all members in the event that someone in the group becomes ill with COVID-19.

Appendix B - COVID-19 Information and Resources

General

CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV

Businesses

CDC Resources for businesses and employers – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html

CDC General business frequently asked questions – www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Federal OSHA – www.osha.gov

Handwashing

www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html

www.cdc.gov/handwashing

Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html

www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

Social distancing

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

Housekeeping

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html

www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

Employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19 www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html

Training

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html

www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf