

RETURN TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP AT GLORY:

Sitting at the picnic table beside our church building, I look over at the community garden and a single gigantic sunflower. The sun itself is shining through a light reddish haze today, a sign of fires burning far away, and one more reminder that we live in precarious times. And yet the lone sunflower blooms facing the light, its stem turning with the earth, its face following the sun. It inspires those who take the time to look. It reminds us to stay rooted on earth, while following the light with our eyes.

Glory Lutheran Church is trying to stay on solid ground while following Jesus by the guidance of the Spirit. As you probably know by now, a special committee has started to plan for the return to in-person worship. We have met two times and at length discussed what is possible and desirable under the present circumstances. We know we have to stay rooted on earth. The pandemic is not over, numbers have started to rise again, and many worry that a second wave is coming. The committee has taken account of your input through the survey and information gathered through personal communication.

The uncertainty that many of you have expressed makes it difficult to come to one definite decision that will satisfy everyone equally. However, at this time we are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to open our doors to some form of in-person worship by mid-October. We are aiming to celebrate confirmation on October 25th, Reformation Sunday. We will only do so when we are satisfied that we can do this safely. To this end we are reviewing all the applicable provincial health guidelines and developing protective measures particular to our facilities. The committee is still discussing these guidelines and measures and will communicate them in writing ahead of time. We already know they will include face masks, social distancing, as well as various cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Our sanctuary can accommodate between 50 and 65 people with proper spacing. This requires much planning and preparation as well as willing volunteers. Particular consideration needs to be given to those who would be in close contact with others, such as sound technicians, instrumentalists, ushers, and pastor. At the same time, we are looking at ways to keep the online worship available for those who will not be worshipping in person.

We are considering an additional smaller gathering on a weekday morning, starting the beginning of October, with up to 15 people for a service of prayer and spoken word. This might be especially attractive for seniors.

Our homes have for now become our sanctuaries. Our front porches and back yards our narthex. Even though our physical fellowship is restricted, we continue to offer our thanks and petitions, our hopes and fears to God in these times. Scripture says that we are the temple of the holy Spirit and that Jesus Christ is in us.

May we stay rooted in faith, keeping our eyes on the love that does not end, the risen Son of God, the light of the world. Let us live with as much self control as the love for our neighbor demands of us.

Thank you for your patience as we work out practical, safe ways to return to in-person worship.

Pastor Markus