

COVID-19 Restriction Update

On Friday, March 12, Governor Tim Walz announced an easing of some restrictions related to COVID-19. The new guidelines became **effective at noon on Monday, March 15, 2021**. Occupancy limits in faith services, including weddings and funerals have been removed; however, capacity must still be adjusted to allow for social distancing.

The synod continues to encourage each congregation to have and use a Safety/Smart Team who study and make recommendations to the council leadership. Recommendations and decisions are made based on the local context of your unique ministry setting.

This faith-based guidance is for worship services; it is not intended for youth programming. **Youth and Family Ministry leaders** may wish to consult the MDH's guidance for schools and youth programming at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf>.

Here is a snapshot from the Minnesota Department of Health on worship services, receptions, celebrations and private social gatherings:

Venue/Activity Description	Previous Requirements	Requirements Starting Monday, March 15, 2021 at noon
Faith Services and Ceremonies (including weddings, funerals, and other seated events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% Capacity • Social Distance of 6 feet between households • Wear a face covering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupancy limit is removed but capacity must be adjusted to allow for Social Distance of 6 feet between households • Wear face covering
Receptions or Celebrations, Gatherings in venues with or without food and beverages*, indoor or outdoor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% Capacity up to 250 • Social Distance of 6 feet between households • Wear face covering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% capacity up to 250 people • Limit capacity to allow for Social Distance of 6 feet between groups of 6 people • Wear face coverings
*Gathering in venues with food and beverages	In addition to the capacity, distancing and face covering requirements above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People must be seated when consuming food and beverages • Table size is limited to 6 people • No food or beverages (except for water) between 11 pm and 4 am 	In addition to the capacity, distancing and face covering requirements above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People must be seated when consuming food and beverages • Table size is limited to 6 people • No food or beverage (except for water) between 11 pm and 4 am.
Private social gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoors: up to 10 people from 2 households • Outdoors: up to 15 people from 3 households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoors: 15 people • Outdoors: 50 people

What does this mean for congregational worship and other activities? It does NOT mean that worship and other church activities are “back to normal.”

Please read through the [Governor’s Emergency Executive Order 21-11](#) from March 12, 2021. You will see such items as the following:

- Masks and face covering are still required.
- Places of worship, funeral homes and other venues that offer gathering space for wedding ceremonies, funeral services, or other planned services such as worship, rituals, prayer meetings, or scripture studies are strongly encouraged to offer virtual alternatives to the maximum extent possible. These venues are still required to have and follow a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in accordance with guidance available on the Stay Safe Minnesota website.
- Congregational singing, group singing or chanting by attendees is not recommended for indoor settings. See www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf, page 6.
- Drive in gathering are encouraged, following the Stay Safe Minnesota guidance.
- Indoor social gatherings are discouraged, but gatherings up to 15 people indoors or 50 people outdoors are permitted, assuming adherence to Stay Safe Minnesota precautions.
- Remote work is still strongly recommended. Until mid-April, employees who can work from home must work from home. Beginning April 15, employers are strongly encouraged to allow employees who can work from home to continue to do so.

You may find additional information on the [Stay Safe Minnesota website](#), including guidance specific to places of worship. This and other similar information is frequently updated. Be sure to check the posting date of any references to make sure you have the most current version.