

Worship, Sacrament, and Related matters

In general: see this resource for guidelines from the ELCA Worship Office--
"Worship in Times of Public Health Concerns"

Online Communion?

In cases of virtual worship gatherings, the sacrament of Holy Communion is not to be celebrated. "The Use of the Means of Grace" reminds us that Holy Communion takes place in the assembly (Principle 39). Even in times when a community cannot gather to share the sacrament, Jesus shows up, and we are still part of the body of Christ.

Alternative date for Easter? The date of Easter is not ours to set. Holy Week and Easter services should be provided for in an alternative manner as all other worship services. What a congregation may consider doing is setting a later date for celebrating resurrection--perhaps along with a service of thanksgiving for the passing (or lessening) of the pandemic. Such a worship could feature all of the elements of an Easter worship. But it is not an alternative date of Easter--particularly as we don't yet know for certain when we'll be able to gather again for public worship.

Funerals in a time of limited gatherings: please see the ELCA resource, "Guidance for Funeral Practices..."

Weddings in a time of limited gatherings: be in touch with all couples who have weddings scheduled for the next three months to let them know you're attuned to their concerns--and to put some boundaries on when and how decisions will be made. June couples take back seat to April couples. Most of the decisions that need to be made fall on them.

You need to be available to provide pastoral support, calm and creativity for the ceremony. They might consider:

- Getting married by you or a civil authority on the date listed on their marriage license, and planning to celebrate via the rite for Prayer and Blessing after a Civil Marriage (adapted appropriately if the marriage was presided over by clergy). This is a way of postponing the 'celebration' without postponing the marriage.
- Drastically reducing the number of participants and live-streaming the planned ceremony.
- Postponing everything until the situation changes.

Care should be taken to properly return marriage licenses already issued--even if the marriage is postponed (check instructions issued with the license to determine timeframes and deadlines).