To the beloved of God at St John’s Lutheran Church,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! It is with great joy and thanksgiving that I write to you today to announce that we will be gathering at our Lord’s altar to receive His precious gifts in Word and Sacrament beginning Sunday May 31st at 9:30 a.m. The Elders and I have made all of the preparations concerning how and when we will celebrate the Mass, and the Board of Properties is prepared to clean and disinfect the Church to minimize the risks involved with the Coronavirus.

We have waited longingly for this opportunity to gather once again as the Body of Christ in His glorious presence. And to receive His mercy in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. In preparation for this, the Board of Elders and I have established a protocol for our gathering that will minimize risk, while remaining faithful to our Lord’s Word and Institution.

* Before you come to Church, consider checking your temperature out of concern for others
* If you are not feeling well (or have a temperature) please stay home until you are feeling better
* Masks must be worn by all in attendance, and we ask that you provide your own as we will be unable to provide enough for everyone (If you have a cloth mask please wash it before coming to Church)
* Church will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. **The doors will be locked at 9:40 a.m.** and not reopened as there will be no one serving in the narthex to do so, and to minimize any risk associated with touching the surfaces of the door. So please make the appropriate preparations.
* The offering will be received in the wooden box (usually found by the front door). Which will be placed in the center aisle where you may place your offerings either before you sit or when you come up for communion.
* Strict Social distancing will be followed. Seating will be as follows 4 people on the aisle end of the pew, we will skip a pew and then 4 people on the window end of the row alternating that way throughout the Church. Sit only where bulletins are placed, we will not be using the hymnals, so leave them as they are to avoid the necessity of cleaning them. Large print bulletins will be provided for everyone and placed prior to the service to mark where you are to sit.
* Please do not congregate in the Narthex, or “visit” in the sanctuary before the service. We know that everyone is excited to see each other, and we would all like to visit and greet one another. But the guidelines we have received from the District recommend avoiding this to minimize risk. So please, upon entering the Church go directly to a seat.
* The reception of Holy Communion will be at the end of the service so that having received we can all leave immediately. Again, this is to minimize risk.
* There will be no one serving accept the Pastor, so communion will be in a continuous line.
* When you come forward, Pastor will place the Host in your outstretched hand saying “Take and eat, the very Body of Christ given for you” (there will be no oral reception for the time being to avoid undue risk)
* The Blood of Christ will be individual Cup only. A table will be set up in the front and once you have received the Host, you may proceed and carefully pick up a cup as Pastor says “Take and Drink, the very Blood of Christ shed for you” (The cups will be spread out so as to avoid unnecessary touching)
* Having received the Blessed Sacrament, please deposit the empty cup in the Basket provided at the end of the Pew and exit down the side aisle of the Church (Pulpit side) And depart in the Lord’s peace through the side entrance of the Church.
* There will be no dismissal
* Please remember to take your bulletin with you to assist the cleanup crew. And for the protection of others.
* There will be hand sanitizer available in multiple places and you are encouraged to use it as you may feel the need or desire.
* Please do not congregate outside the Church so as to avoid any misunderstanding with our neighbors or the authorities
* Please also note that the chairlift will not be in use for the time being, but the basement will be set up for proper social distancing.

Following each service, the Church will need to be cleaned. The Board of Properties has volunteered to do the cleaning for the first service, but volunteers would be greatly appreciated. If you are willing to assist with the cleaning please contact Michael Clandorf at (917) 602-4976 or David Cavagnaro at (917) 887-0482.

We know that this process will be different, but we encourage you to remember that it is temporary, and for the protection of ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us rejoice in the fact that we may once again gather at the Lord’s house and receive His blessings. We look forward to seeing you all, and raising our voices together with angels and archangels, and with the whole host of heaven as we revel in the Lord’s grace and peace at His holy altar.

In Christ’s Peace,

Pastor Bagnall and the Board of Elders