The new reopening rules limit religious services, including at the Cathedral of St. Paul, to 10 attendees.

**RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

**We safely hold more than 10**

While the Emergency Executive Order 20-56 regarding “Stay Safe MN” offers some modicum of relief to small businesses, it inexplicably distinguishes between shoppers (“store occupancy must not exceed 50 percent of the normal occupant capacity as determined by the fire marshal”) and those who would gather for “faith-based” events. (“Dialing down lockdown,” front page, May 14.) Presumably, it does this because the latter involves more time gathered in the same space. For religious services, “All gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited.”

Let that sink in: 10 worshipers inside the Cathedral of St. Paul. The interior nave of the Cathedral spans 180 feet at its widest point and includes 224 pews. Seating capacity is well over 2,000 people. While math was never my strong suit, across the eight sections of pews, we could accommodate 30 unrelated people in row 20 alone, leaving 216 pews empty! Yet we have been granted 10 attendees, including me!

Stay Safe MN discounts the possibility that places of religious worship are capable of devising a responsible plan whereby the 6-foot social-distancing guidelines are observed while also providing spiritual sustenance to their members. A limit of 10 appears unscientific, unjustified and, dare I say, capricious. What a shame.

The writer is the rector at the Cathedral of St. Paul.

**SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**A delayed funeral served us well**

In response to “With regular funerals hindered by social distancing, how can I honor my mom?” (StarTribune.com, May 14), one of my dearest aunts who lived in Moorhead, Minn., died at age 90 during the big Red River flood of 2009. It was late March and the cemetery was flooded, plus travel in town and lodging were questionable. So the family waited until June for a memorial service. The delay was worth it and exceeded expectations.

**FACE MASKS**

**The message behind the mask**

In the column “Reading lips in a masked world” (May 13), the writer wrote a beautiful message: "Knowing the bottom of the mask, I am comforted by the presence of the individual wearing it. I can see them as human beings, as neighbors, as people who are part of the world with me."

The writer is an epidemiologist.