

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING WORSHIP IN THE BUILDING

What's taken us so long to get worship going in person? At the end of May we were hearing projections of churches opening up mid to late June at somewhere between 10-25%. With that understanding we held a Worship Readiness Committee meeting which made a number of recommendations with a target date of opening up the last Sunday of June or first Sunday in July, pending state openings and guidelines. Between that meeting and our last council meeting on June 11th, there have been two new sets of guidelines for houses of worship from the CDC and U.S. Dept. of Health and MN State and MN Dept. of Health. This fluid, ever changing situation presents a challenge to have the most accurate and up to date information to make the best possible decisions. An updated set of guidelines and protocols was just released on June 15th and will be reviewed at the next council meeting. The newest set of guidelines and protocols more specifically address weddings, funerals, gatherings that are held in places other than a church building, and events before or after worship.

What if I like worshipping at home and would rather do that? Worshipping online is a valid way to worship and if that works best for you and your household right now, feel free to continue worshipping online. As you worship online, we want you to know you are not forgotten and you are a valuable part of the church. Please feel free to reach out to us and help us stay connected with you

What if I want to come to worship in the building, but I am at risk? We can't tell you what to do, but please know we care deeply about you, your health and well-being. We want what is best for you. We do not want you to risk your health. Worshipping online is a valid way of worshipping God. We encourage you to look after your health needs, continue worshipping online, and help us find ways to stay connected because you are not forgotten and you are a valuable part of the church.

I have heard that for some churches in the area you have to register in advance to come to church and others where you are assigned one week a month to come to church for worship. Do I need to register or are you going to let me know when to come? We are very blessed with the space we have. Based on summer worship attendance in the past, our space works for summer worship. You do not need to register in advance, and you are welcome to come every week it works for you. Due to the 6 feet of physical distancing there are less chairs in the sanctuary, but if we should happen to exceed the number of people who will fit in the sanctuary, the Gathering Space is set to accommodate worship as well and we have the two TV's in the Gathering Space.

In different risk charts, churches are listed as a higher risk than going to a restaurant or shopping, why? Churches have been places where COVID-19 started with one person and spread widely to others. Some of the key factors that create spread are present at church: different households are interacting, because of the closeness "family" feel of church people become lax in maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing, people are together for a longer period of time (compared to

shopping), and public unison responses (not done at restaurants) are often spoken in a louder voice (see below info on singing) than in a one on one conversation (putting more aerosols into the air especially when people are not wearing a mask).

When will Holy Communion happen? Before we celebrate Holy Communion in the church building we want to have had a few weeks of public worship in the sanctuary. As a result, our next Holy Communion service will most likely be in July. Watch the weekly emails for more info. We will continue to offer online Holy Communion, and we will look into the possibility of also offering another drive thru, walk up Holy Communion at the church building.

What's the deal with no singing? From the National Association of Teachers of Singing and the American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, the Barbershop Harmony Society, and the Performing Arts Medical Association put together "What Science and Data Say about the Near-term Future of Singing:" "The medical experts state as a fact that there is currently no safe way to sing together. Masks do not sufficiently contain the aerosol spread caused by singing. Nor does the 6 feet social distancing protect people from the virus, due to the varying aerosol clouds emitted by singers. The experts recommended that all in person group singing activities be postponed. As a result, many choral groups around the world have suspended rehearsals, performances, and in-person singing, opting to postpone until it is safe or choosing to pivot to online formats." From the CDC: "Laser imagery and video has shown that thousands of fine droplets can be spewed into the air when people speak. The louder they speak (for example in unison responses during worship) the more virus-containing droplets are spewed forth. And those droplets can remain airborne for 8 minutes or longer. Singing can project these droplets even further." Cases of widespread COVID-19 have occurred at churches with social distancing but when one person attended who was positive for COVID-19 was singing, spreading to as many as 52 of 61 people in one case (documented by the CDC) and 102 of 130 in another case (documented in Europe). In addition the MN Department of Health's protocols for churches are "to refrain from singing or chanting," allowing for one person to sing if wearing a mask and at least 12 feet away from other household units. The council will continue to watch the research and guidelines and protocols on this topic.

Are we going to have a Coffee Hour after worship? When the council met, the guidelines and protocols for opening up for a coffee hour were still pending from the state. The council decided that it would be best to have a few weeks of worship in the building before figuring out if or how to do a coffee hour. At the council's next meeting, the council will go through the guidelines and protocols for having a coffee hour.

Why isn't there scheduled music this coming Sunday? We are in need of more pianists/organists, instrumentalists and vocalists. The number of people available in these areas as musicians has significantly decreased due to individuals needing to

do what is best for their own health and well-being during this time of pandemic. If you know someone or have some ideas for musicians, please let us know.

Why are there no ushers and what is a Guide? The regular usher duties of passing out bulletins, receiving the offering, and ushering people forward for communion do not exist at this time. However, there are some new areas of responsibility during this time of pandemic: having the outside doors open 20 minutes before worship and immediately after worship, having the outside doors closed once worship starts, making sure the sanctuary doors are kept open, helping people to find seats/understand seating and maintaining appropriate physical distancing if more chairs are added, encouraging people in face mask use, helping people find hand sanitizer, where to place their offering, etc.

Why are masks strongly encouraged? The language “strongly encouraged” comes straight from MN State and the MN Department of Health. From the MN Department of Health, “Face coverings help slow the spread of COVID-19 by helping to keep the person wearing the covering from infecting others. Evidence suggests that the virus causing COVID-19 can be spread by droplets released from the nose and throat of an infected person when they cough, sneeze, sing, speak, or breathe, even if the infected person is not showing symptoms.” (MN Department of Health/Stay Safe MN released 6/15/2020).

What if I have some suggestions to make worship in the building a better experience? Please give us your suggestions and we’ll see what we can do within the parameters and guidelines of the CDC, MN State, and MN Dept. of Health. We are certain that we haven’t thought about everything. Just as the online worship has evolved (and is hopefully a better experience), we expect our in person in the sanctuary worship experience will evolve.

What if someone attends worship and then discovers they had COVID-19? When church staff or council members learn that someone attended worship and had COVID-19 when attending worship, those who attended that same Sunday will be contacted and the whole congregation will be notified. The person’s name who has/had COVID will not be shared. In addition to the notifications that will be sent out, the building will be closed, cleaned and disinfected per the guidelines, protocols and timelines that are advised by the CDC and the MN Department of Health. Following this type of event, it is possible that worship would need to be suspended for the cleaning and disinfection process that is needed or because of spread of COVID-19 within the immediate community.