



November 19, 2020

Dear Bethel Family,

We continue to face disruptions caused by the coronavirus in our church and community. Along with the Bethel council, I am extremely thankful for the graciousness, patience, and support of people at Bethel during these difficult and divisive times. We continue to ask for your prayers for wisdom and discernment as we establish policies and procedures to adapt to changing coronavirus realities.

Here is our latest update to our church ministry plans:

1. **Worship:** *Starting this Sunday (November 22) we will again open up our live-stream service for in-person attendance.* We had suspended these services -- and live-streamed from an empty church sanctuary -- for two weeks after an outbreak among church members. We will resume in-person worship with new guidelines (below).
2. **Other Ministries:** Our other ministry gatherings will continue online -- not meeting regularly in-person -- from now until the end of the year. This includes Ignite Youth Ministry, Wednesday kids ministry, Coffee Break Bible study, and other discipleship groups. Leaders of these groups will exercise their discretion for how to continue these group gatherings.
3. **Office Hours:** Our church office will remain open during its regular hours.
4. **Evaluation Period:** We will re-evaluate these decisions in December, and keep you all informed.

Why are we doing it this way?

You might wonder why we would continue with plans to resume gathering in-person on Sunday mornings, in light of the recent spike in COVID19 -- both in our state, and within our local church. Here are the key factors behind our decision:

- *We believe we can make our services even safer than they have been by adhering to certain guidelines.*
- *We noted that in his recent guideline updates, Minnesota Gov. Walls was very careful to NOT call for changes / closings of church gatherings.*
- *We have established the pattern of live-streaming our services from our sanctuary on Sunday mornings. The service is already happening here at 9:30. If people are willing to mask and social distance, it seems that they can be safe to join us as we stream out the service. It seems a shame to not allow people to join us for this gathering.*
- *We recognize that people can -- and will -- make decisions for themselves about whether to participate in the face-to-face gatherings.*

What are the updated guidelines for our in-person gatherings? What will be different?

1. All people wear masks at all times when they're in the church building. The only exceptions will be singers and speakers, when they are on stage.
2. We will maintain the social distancing we've already established in the sanctuary, with the addition of roping off the front row.
3. The worship team will be smaller, and will maintain social distancing during rehearsals. They will no longer use "the tunnel" beside the stage to gather and wait for the service to begin.
4. We will not sing a closing song -- (thus not spreading around germs in the air after we've all been in the sanctuary for an extended time).
5. We will encourage more social distancing and care during the time before the worship service begins and after it ends.

Once again, we ask for your continued prayers for our church and our community. We pray that we can be "salt and light" to our neighbors during this time. We pray that we can grow in faith and in the knowledge of God, and that God will use these challenges to bring about His purposes in our lives and our world.

In His Service,

--Pastor Mark Brouwer