

Preparation for Change

New Ways To Gather For Worship In Our Church Building

Change can be difficult, but it can help to know reasons why change is needed, and what to expect.

Reasons for changes:

- Though we cannot see it, the coronavirus causing COVID-19 continues to be very present. The virus is the “enemy,” not the people giving restrictions to us.
- Transmission of the virus spreads through “droplets” and smaller particles in the air, the reason for masks and staying at least 6 feet apart (including gathering around the coat rack and in rest rooms).
- The length of time that people are together in enclosed spaces increases transmission of the virus: The service will be shorter in length, and we will be asked to leave the building right after the service.
- The virus remains on surfaces and what we touch: Instead of passing offering plates we will deposit donations in a container in the narthex. Attendance pads will not be used, or bulletins. Hymnals and Bibles are stored for now. There is a disinfecting team to serve and protect us before and after worship.

What to Expect:

God will be present with us, and will teach us new things as followers of Jesus who care for one another in the midst of a pandemic! We will worship God together, though it may “look different” from what we are used to.

Some changes we can expect:

1. When we arrive:

- Doors will open at 9:45 a.m.
- We will be welcomed by a team of people who will encourage us:
 - They will ask us to look at and respond (no / yes) to the list of Health Screening Questions to keep us safe (posted at the door, and sent ahead of time, including “stay home if you are not feeling well.”)
 - Alert:* People coming to the building with COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to leave rather than expose others to the virus.
 - Though there will not be handshakes and hugs, we can “touch our own hands together” with the hand sanitizer stations provided at each door.
 - Team members will help us find a place to sit in the sanctuary (spaces marked in the pews to give social distancing).

2. When we are in the building:

- Watch indicators on the floor helping us keep 6 feet apart.
- Bring coats with you to the sanctuary.

- Worship materials will be on screens, rather than using hymnals, Bibles, and bulletins.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be by all the doors for us to use.
- Congregational singing: This can propel the virus into the air around us. But we can worship in other ways, including soft humming.
- Sorry that we will not have coffee and treats.
- Restrooms: Signs will be posted about 2 people in the room at a time.

3. When we leave the building

- If you visit with people outside the building, respect social distance.
- Reflect on what God has said during worship rather than being frustrated about the changes.
- Focus on giving thanks for *what we can do*.

MT, 9/25/20

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, Bloomington Covenant Church

Because we continue to be in a pandemic it is important to do everything we can to keep people as safe as possible. We have an opportunity – to care for others, and to keep ourselves healthy. We pray for protection and health. We also follow guidelines from the MN Department of Health and CDC. See guidelines for Faith Communities:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidfaith>

Guidelines for Faith Communities also require having a *COVID-19 Preparedness Plan*.

Components of the plan are listed below (A – F), along with actions planned for Bloomington Covenant Church. This document will be sent to people in the church and posted on the website and at the entrance of the building.

- A. Health Screenings
- B. Social Distancing
- C. Hygiene (covering coughs, wash hands frequently...)

Actions for A, B, C:

1. “Health and Safety Protocols to Prevent COVID-19” (see document that addresses prevention of spread – stay home if you are sick, wear a mask, keep at least 6 feet apart, wash hands thoroughly and use hand sanitizer, disinfect surfaces that are touched. The document also lists Health Screening Questions.)
2. The Health and Safety Protocols document was sent to people involved in outdoor gatherings, to volunteers who entered the building, and was included in newsletters. The document amended for indoor worship will be sent to people prior to worship in the building, and posted on the website. Accountability for following the protocols is on leaders of staff and volunteer teams.

3. Protocols above are also posted on doors, and people coming into the building for worship gatherings also will be asked to answer no / yes to the health screening questions, and leave if they answer yes. There will be follow up as needed.
4. Masks will be required, and social distancing.
5. Social distancing markings will be on the floors, and on the pews in the sanctuary.
6. Signs on the restroom doors will indicate that only 2 people should be in the room.
7. There will be no coffee and refreshments.
8. Offerings will be deposited into a box in the narthex rather than passing offering plates.

D. Cleaning, disinfectant and ventilation protocols

1. Cleaning products recommended by the CDC are being used.
2. Rest rooms and other surfaces touched by people are disinfected before and following times when people are in the building for worship, as well as in routine maintenance.
3. There are hand-sanitizing stations at all the doors, and people entering the building are encouraged to sanitize their hands.
4. Extra furniture, books & papers have been removed to minimize the virus remaining on surfaces.
5. The length of time for a worship service will be less than an hour to minimize spread of the virus in a closed space. People will be encouraged to promptly leave the building after the worship service.
6. Singing also propels the virus into a closed space and will not be done in the usual way.
7. Building ventilation: We are purchasing Merv 13 air filters for the ventilation that serves the sanctuary, narthex, west room, library, and office. For the future: We are looking into the cost of bipolar ionization for the same areas. We are also looking into portable bipolar ionization units for the classrooms.

E. Administrative and occupancy controls

1. The BCC Sanctuary holds 500, and technically there can be 50% occupancy. However with social distancing (over 6 feet) the safe space would decrease occupancy. Note: average attendance used to be 160, but some may choose to worship on-line because of the pandemic.
Accountability for occupancy will be followed through asking people to indicate they are coming to a service so space for social distancing can be planned. A team member will record attendance as people arrive.
2. Occupancy control will also be followed for other rooms when they are used.
3. A team of volunteers will guide people to places where they can sit in the sanctuary to follow social distancing of more than 6 feet.

F. Communication, and training

1. Communication about worship gatherings outdoors and plans for indoors has been included in regular messages to the church. Messages about the Preparedness Plan, Health and Safety Protocols, and “New Ways to Gather for Worship...” also will be sent through BCC newsletters, emails, the website, and personal communication (partnership of staff and health professional team).

2. Communication includes reasons for the actions we need to take (caring for others as part of our church mission, as well as following public health guidelines meant to keep us safe).
3. We seek to encourage about what we “can do,” not just what is prohibited, and provide some hope and positive perspectives.
4. Training for the various teams for indoor worship (AV/Video, Worship Team, “People Movement,” Sanitizing, Preparing the building, Communication, other...): This will include orientation to entries in the *COVID-19 Preparedness Plan*, Health and Safety Protocols, “New Ways to Gather for Worship,” as well as training for the role of each team. Training will be planned and implemented by the team leader.

Health and Safety Protocols to Prevent COVID-19

Alert: Because we continue to be in a pandemic it is important to do everything we can to keep everyone as safe as possible. We have an opportunity – to care for others, and to keep ourselves healthy. We pray for protection and health. We also follow guidelines from the MN Department of Health and CDC.

General Guidelines to Prevent Spread of COVID-19:

- + Stay home if you are sick or not feeling well
- + Wear a mask
- + Keep at least 6 feet apart
- + Wash hands thoroughly and use hand sanitizer
- + Disinfect surfaces that are touched

Health Screening Questions that alert us to know if someone may have symptoms that needs to be addressed:

You will be asked to respond to the following questions when you come to the building:

1. **Are you feeling sick or not well today?**
Also see specific symptoms in #2 below:
if you are feeling sick you need to go home right away.
2. Have you been sick in the last 2 weeks, and if so did you have a *new*
 - a. cough
 - b. fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit and over
 - c. shortness of breath
 - d. sore throat
 - e. body aches, fatigue
 - f. chills
 - g. loss of smell and taste
 - h. nausea and diarrhea

3. Has anyone in your household had any of those symptoms in the last 2 weeks, or cared for someone positive for COVID-19?
4. Do you have any reason to believe that you or anyone in your household has been exposed to or acquired COVID-19 in the last 2 weeks?

Help that is available if you answer “yes” to any of these questions:

Contact your health provider, or you may call to request to schedule a test for COVID-19 at sites in Bloomington: MHealthFairview: 855/324-7843; AllinaHealth: 952/428-1800.

9/25/20, BCC Health Professionals Ministry Team

For Questions: Contact marythompson199@gmail.com, 952/454-0979