

Congregational Church of Brookfield – Current Covid Situation

June 17, 2020

Hello, brothers and sisters.

Church Council has prepared this update of our policy related to the Covid-19 situation. As you are well aware, we are midst of a graduated re-opening of business and community sites, and we, in attempting to piece together all the facts and responding to ongoing changes and recommendations regarding management of this situation wanted our current thoughts and guidelines. As always, we welcome your input.

Indoor Worship and Other Church Events: Council has taken advantage of much guidance on how we might be able to re-open our church facility and begin to approach a level of normalcy that we all crave. We have tried to balance the need for direct congregational gatherings against the potential to put some of us at increased health risk – which is obviously a key concern.

At this point, and based on the ever-changing guidance we are receiving from epidemiologists and the CDC and the recommendations we are getting from the United Church of Christ, we didn't think we could reasonably make a decision NOW on a specific date to resume what we might consider "normal" church gatherings and services. The dates for this may morph and change over time, so, our current thoughts lead us to a September re-opening, and frankly, this could change based on the situation at that time. As necessary, we may adjust that date, or we may implement procedural changes to the service so we can provide the best church experience with the least risk.

Zoom Worship Services: Many of you have participated in our pre-recorded, virtual services via Zoom. We continue to learn and exploit this format as we grow in the experience and get feedback. You should look for these services to continue in until conditions have changed as mentioned above. Trying to go back to in-person gatherings is daunting – to protect the most vulnerable, we need to practice social distancing, wear masks, eliminate unison prayers and group singing – which of course, takes away from what we would consider a "normal" CCB worship experience. We hope this ends soon.

However, we are exploring options for a safe way to get together for prayer and sharing in-person devotions. The intent is to provide some "normalcy" while operating within the public health constraints we have at present.

Sincerely,

Jack Brown

Jack Brown, CCB Moderator

Sunday Prayer Meetings: Trial basis begins **Sunday, June 28, 8:30-9:00am**

- All will covenant to comply with social distance guidelines of CDC (see above)
- An online tool will be used for pre-registration (with assigned spaces)
- Parking in upper lot only (north driveway closed & traffic cones out for safety)
- Socially distanced spaces will be laid out for worshippers to DIY setup (chairs, cushions, blankets) in lower parking lot or another appropriate location
- Those over 65 or with underlying medical conditions are advised to stay home
- Kids must stay with parents in assigned space (no playground use or running free)
- Accessible parking spaces will be reserved on shady south side by campfire circle, for those who need to remain in cars to worship safely
- Greeters (wearing masks) provide cards for all describing our worship/CDC guidelines
- Greeters will distribute paper masks, as needed
- Extra spaces will be held for unregistered visitors
- Sign in front of church will be revised with online signup information

Know that the above is our initial thoughts in order to establish this forum – we welcome feedback.

Phased-in Church Re-Open Plan

The discussion on Covid response has been an ongoing, exhaustive discussion involving numerous church committees and the council. The process/guidelines below were framed and agreed with representation from those committees at council:

Considerations and Requirements:

- Top Priority: Health and Safety of all church members (protect the most

vulnerable)

- Potential new requirements or accommodations:
 - Building setup/cleaning schedule changes
 - Social distancing compliance (behavior changes)
 - Sound equipment for outside worship

Phasing Guidelines (at present):

These phases will be reviewed and discussed at each Church Council Meeting and are therefore subject to change. Changes will be communicated in blast emails and posted on the church website.

Proposed phases:

- **Phase 1: Administrative Only** (building CLOSED to public, began March 13, 2020)
 - Pastors, staff, and volunteers only allowed in building for essential duties
 - Limited cleaning, maintenance allowed
 - Services continue online via Zoom only
- **Phase 2: Limited Access** (building mostly CLOSED to congregation, began May 12)
 - Start to allow limited small groups (5 or less) into church with permission and scheduled through Office Administrator
 - In full compliance with social distance guidelines of CDC (masks, 6 feet apart, frequent hand washing)
 - No communal food or beverage
 - Wipe down of all surfaces before leaving (limit use of bathrooms, as possible)
 - Church provides extra masks, and cleaning materials in bathroom
 - No entry into church office without permission

- **Phase 3: Expanded Building Access** (May 20 – June 20)
Allow approved church groups or outside organizations to gather (35* or fewer) inside church (Fellowship Hall, storage, and downstairs bathrooms only) or church grounds with permission and scheduled through Office Administrator.
 - In full compliance with social distance guidelines of CDC (masks, 6 feet apart, frequent hand washing)
 - No communal food or beverage
 - Wipe down of all surfaces before leaving (limit use of bathrooms, as possible)
 - Church provides extra masks for unprotected individuals, and cleaning materials made available in bathroom
 - No entry into other church areas without permission (no use of Creation Station or Fellowship Hall kitchen)
 - Any facilities-use organization (such as AA) pays for after-use extra cleaning from our cleaning company, although we will look for smart options to limit this burden – cleaning schedule etc.
 - Church services continue to be via the online Zoom format
- **Phase 4: Partial Re-Opening** (after June 20)

Weekday use/Facilities users:

- *Individuals or groups smaller than 10* are welcome in our outdoor spaces (Signage to be posted Campfire Circle, Labyrinth, Memorial Garden, Outdoor Chapel and Playground to advise social distancing.)
- Church Office and Courtyard door remains locked (Doorbell camera is in place)
- *Organized church groups of 10 or more* are permitted to gather outside on church grounds **with permission and scheduled through Office Administrator**
- Church committees or groups can use Church School wing or Brooks Hall, **with permission and with room of size appropriate to maintain social**

distancing scheduled through Office Administrator.

- Approved outside organizations will be allowed to gather in groups of 20* or less inside Fellowship Hall (using storage and downstairs bathrooms only – no use of Fellowship Hall Kitchen) or in outdoor spaces
 - Any group (CCB members or outside users) agrees to remain in compliance with social distance guidelines of the CDC and our CT Governor’s direction.
 - Masks will be worn and hands washed frequently (or use hand sanitizer)
 - People (or family groups) remain 6 feet apart
 - No sharing of communal food or beverage
 - Wipe down of all surfaces before leaving
 - Limit use of bathrooms, as possible
 - Church provides extra masks, and cleaning materials in bathrooms
 - No entry into other-than-assigned church areas without permission
 - Groups are responsible for setting up (and paying for) after-use cleaning with office, as needed, based on usage
 - Those over 65 or with underlying medical conditions are advised to stay home
 - Anyone experiencing potential symptoms of Covid MUST stay home
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- **Recorded online Zoom services and Sunday Outdoor Prayer Meetings will continue on a trial basis.** Council will revisit this policy and hear your input at the July 14th meeting.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Why not Outdoor Chapel? Or another outdoor location?
 - Outdoor Chapel has barely enough space for 40-50 people when we are at full capacity. There is not enough space to follow CDC social distancing guidelines.
 - The north field near Memorial Garden is possible, but there is no shade.
 - The campfire circle/labyrinth area is possible, but it is less accessible to those with mobility issues (and to set up worship sound equipment).
 - The front & side yard of the Barn is another possibility, with better drive-up accessibility.
 - We may try one (or all) of these locations as we enter this “trial” phase.
- When will we have communion again, and how?
 - Prepackaged or BYO communion may be tried after June 28
 - CDC still recommends no communal food or beverage
- What is our rain contingency plan?
 - Plan A: Pray for sunshine!
 - Plan B: Stay in cars (cars could park in lower lot in assigned DIY worship space)
 - Plan C: Cancel/go home (Fellowship Hall capacity remains 20 people for now)
 - Plan D: Tents are possible, but first we want to try it without extra expense.
- How long, O Lord, how long?
 - See Psalm 13
 - Covid-19 research continues and the news (and recommendations) evolve almost daily, so Council will revisit this policy on July 14 and we welcome your feedback

- Communication of Policy:
 - To be distributed going forward in a monthly email blast and on the church website after each Council Meeting (or adjusted as necessary).
- Feedback:
 - We are a congregational church and we welcome discussion and recommendations on an ongoing basis.
 - You may respond to the email blast – change subject line to Covid Feedback – this feedback will be shared as noted above, and with the broader council members.
 - If you wish to direct input to individual leaders you can email your Pastors at Bryn@uccb.org or Jennifer@uccb.org. Moderator Jack Brown's address is jjbrown@us.ibm.com and Vice Moderator Amy D'Alessandro's email address is amyrdallessandro@gmail.com.