

## COMING BACK TO THE BUILDING TO WORSHIP WHAT TO EXPECT

Hey folks, guess what, the countdown has started for us to reenter the building for worship. Before I get into the details, however, I have to confess, I'm feeling a bit of fear and trepidation with this. Why? Because I believe that this will be harder for some of us than it was for us to stay home and watch online or listen on the phone. The reason? This first phase of coming back will require a number of restrictions. So, let me suggest two things that will help us have the best worship experience we can have given those restrictions. The first one concerns our mindset. Let's remind ourselves that this is moving from not being able to meet in the building at all, to the first phase of being able to come back. In other words, work forward from online only to this first step of meeting with restrictions. This will not look, and probably more important, not feel like what we are used to. If we come back thinking about what worship was like 3 months ago, we will more likely set ourselves up for disappointment and frustration. Instead, let's come with the mindset that this will be a different experience, but also a temporary one. Again, this is just the first phase.

The second item is not about mindset, it's about our hearts. It's so important that when we come back initially, that we have the heart of Christ. So, here's a passage of Scripture that we all need to be working off of. It's from Philippians 2:3 *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."* People are all over the place when it comes to thinking about how bad this virus is, what to do to be safe, etc. Therefore, come back with a heart that is humble enough to know *"I need to do these things for the sake of everyone else who will be here."* Recognize that you do not know another person's vulnerability or that of the people they will go home to or have responsibility to care for. So, let's each do our part to help each other feel as safe as we possibly can so we can begin to worship God again, together.

So, having said that, let's move into the what this will initially look like. Think Turkey Supper. We have certain seatings and you have to call and make a reservation to come. The same will be true for worship. (This is the model I'm finding that many churches with smaller sanctuaries are using).

We will begin by offering 3 worship services per week.

Because seating will be limited to allow for social distancing you must call the church and let us know what service you will be coming to. We will only be able to accommodate 25-30 people per service so once a service is filled reservations will be closed. In order to be fair to everyone you must sign up each week for a service. In other words, you cannot sign up for a service for the entire summer at once. Also, you can only sign up your household, no one else's.

This is what the weekly schedule will look like. The first service will be held on Thursday night at 6:30pm in the sanctuary. The second service will be held at 8:00am on Sunday morning in Barclay Hall. The third service will be held at 10am in the sanctuary. (This will help reduce the stress of having to clean and disinfect the sanctuary between Sunday morning services.) The 10am Sunday morning service in the sanctuary will also continue to be streamed on Facebook Live.

Alright, now that you have a reservation for a particular service, let's move to coming to the church. What you need to know is we will continue to follow the guidelines given to churches from the Governor, the CDC, our ABCORI leadership as well as our insurance company. Good news, they all say the same thing. Our insurance company basically says we need to follow CDC guidelines for liability sake and our Executive Minister was on the task force with the governor for guidelines to reopen churches.

So first, we are including a health check list for you to have at home. You will receive one every week. Before leaving, please go through it for yourself and everyone else in your household. (When we had the service at Canonicus a few weeks ago, we all had to fill one out and sign it.) We're asking that you date it and keep it. You do not have to bring it with

you, we are trusting you did this for the sake of others. If someone from our church gets the virus, we may need you to produce them for the CDC. Please be honest with it and if you are not feeling well then stay home that day. Participate in the service online, instead.

Remember Philippians 2:3 (I'm going to reference this repeatedly, lol)

2. Be sure to bring a mask & hand sanitizer. Yes, you must wear a mask. If you don't others will not be comfortable being here. Remember, masks are for the purpose of limiting you from infecting anyone else. There are already examples of churches where someone got Covid 19 at church and they had to shut down again. The common factor seemed to be that masks were optional in those settings. We will have sanitizer and extra masks available.

3. Once you arrive at the church please make sure you are practicing social distancing as soon as you get out of your car.

If you are coming to a service that meets in the sanctuary please use the front entrance. The door to Trinity Hall from the parking lot will not be open. Of course, if you need to use the ramp for accessibility purposes, then come in that door.

If you are coming to the service in Barclay Hall, then please use the door marked "Kitchen" off the parking lot. Unfortunately, this service will not be Handicapped accessible.

4. At this point a host will help you find your assigned seat. We need to have assigned seating because the number of reservations and seating configuration will change depending the number of people in each household. Please remain in your seats until the service is over and then, please exit through the door you came in. We will be Cleaning /sanitizing as soon as building is clear.

**The following areas of the building will be open to during worship**

(Note: we will not be using the mailboxes at this time)

**SANCTUARY SERVICES**

- Welcome Area (Narthex)
- Bathroom in Welcome Area
- Sanctuary

## BARCLAY HALL SERVICE

- Hall
- Bathroom behind stage

All other areas will be inaccessible until further notice. If you go anywhere else, we will now be required to clean and disinfect the whole building. Please don't make us have to do that.

### 5. Changes that you will notice during worship:

- All hymnals, bibles, and paper items have been removed from the pews.
- No coffee being served. (we didn't have it in the summer anyway)
- Services will be modified to 45/50 minutes.
- There will be an offering box for you to place your offering in. We will not be passing the plate.
- On communion Sunday we will be using pre-packaged elements. They will be placed in pews or on chairs prior to service by people wearing gloves and masks. At the end of the service, please dispose of them on your way out in receptacle
- If you need to use the restroom, please make sure you use the Lysol spray or the disinfectant wipes before you leave. Spray or wipe down everything you might have touched.
- If you bring children, they will need to stay with you the whole time. If they need to use the bathroom, please accompany them to make sure you clean as was outlined above.

6. Childcare. Unfortunately, childcare will not be provided for any of the worship services at this time. (This breaks my heart because I know this makes it much more difficult for our parents of young children) The restrictions required are pretty strict and beyond what we can do right now. As we've talked with and read what other churches are doing most seem to be in the same boat. We are working on providing a resource for children to watch on a tablet or similar device that would be used during the sermon time that would be geared for their age. We'll keep you posted as to our progress with that.

Wow! That's a lot of stuff. It doesn't make me feel good that we have to come back to such restrictions. At the same time, I can't wait to be able to see you and worship together, even though it will be so different. The restrictions are but for a season. Hopefully a very short one. Being with you again is more than a season, it's worshipping our Lord together. For me, that far outweighs it all. Let's be patient and humble and even grateful for this first step to being back together and do all we can to put others first.