REOPENING

Bethel
BAPTIST CHURCH

FOUR PHASE PLAN
Introduction

On Sunday morning, March 15, we made the decision to cancel our Sunday morning services. This was a decision that was based on the situation at that time. Of course, when that decision was made, we had no idea that it would be eight weeks before we could meet in person again. Since that time, the pandemic has grown in ways few imagined, and restrictions on in-person gatherings have been extended several times. The Bethel Baptist pastors, and staff, have responded to these restrictions by conducting livestream worship services and drive-in services, providing Zoom access to many of our Bible Fellowship participants, and we have also recorded weekly lessons. Our church Ministry Assistants have also assisted us by personally calling many of our senior adult members.

On May 4, 2020, Gov. Ralph Northam indicated that Virginia would likely enter Phase One of his *Forward Virginia* plan which would include the easing of restrictions on businesses and churches. Thus, we believe it is time to plan a gradual, responsible and safety conscious, plan for reopening our church campus. This will be done with government, CDC and other health professionals’ guidelines in mind. Currently, we are in “Phase 0” – only meeting online. Phases are outlined below and are based on changing health trends and guidelines.

Executive Summary

Bethel Baptist Church leaders are committed to making each service the best it can be while still submitting to the larger scope of wisdom regarding in-person gatherings. Clearly, this situation is fluid, yet, in spite of the uncertainty, we have been working on a phased plan to reopen our campus based on the best available information. This plan prioritizes love for our neighbors by keeping people safe (Mt 22:39), showing proper, biblical respect for government authority (Rom 13:1), and demonstrating that we trust our Church family to make wise decisions.

There is no question that our desire is to gather in-person, but we are committed to doing so in a safe and responsible way through a phased approach. A phased transition allows for a measured and prudent conversion from the online only era to in-person gatherings across the full range of church activities. Deciding how to move through the phases is complex. Although we are monitoring the situation and working in conjunction with our state and local authorities, the reality is our Governor will establish the criteria for the transition between phases and dictate the precautions.. The state’s process is informed by the White House framework for a three phased approach to resuming activity. You can view that plan at the White House website at: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/#criteria](https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/#criteria). In addition, Bethel will employ the following best practices:
• **Medical professionals:** We will work with medical professionals to develop best practices related to the health of those attending in-person worship gatherings.

• **General Guidance:** Each person has a responsibility to look out for the welfare of others. If you suspect that you or a member of your family have symptoms, stay home until the period has expired and/or testing has occurred. From the CDC - symptoms may appear **2-14 days** after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms or combinations of symptoms **may** have COVID-19:
  • Cough
  • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Or at least **two** of these symptoms:
  • Fever
  • Chills
  • Repeated shaking with chills
  • Muscle pain
  • Headache
  • Sore throat
  • Loss of taste or smell

• **Appropriate social distancing:** Since the standard is 6 feet for appropriate social distancing, we will utilize that standard in calculating the distance between family units in pews, worship leaders, and all volunteers and staff.

• **Provide COVID-19 protection:** We will have a limited number of masks on-hand and will provide hand sanitizing stations throughout the building and at exits and entrances. We will not mandate the wearing of masks.

• **Discourage personal contact:** We will discontinue meet and greet times in worship and maintain social distancing.

• **Clean & clean again:** Protocols will be implemented to reduce the spread of the virus on campus.

• **CDC Guidelines:** We will follow specific CDC guidance for childcare or educational programming for children and youth. We encourage those with underlying health conditions to avoid in-person gatherings (for a detailed list, see [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html)).

**Worship and Bible Fellowship Options**

• **We will continue to offer livestreaming** of worship as in-person phases begin. In this way, the church provides two options: limited worship in the church and livestreaming online.

• **We will provide pre-registration** for in-person worship to limit attendees, based on the Governor’s guidelines and our capacity with social distancing measures in place. Although we will reduce seating capacity for in-person worship services, family units can be seated together.

• **Small groups/Bible Fellowship classes** will continue to meet online in early phases. Classrooms will not be available during initial phases of reopening.

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**FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ON COVID-19:**


Virginia Governor’s COVID-19 Web page: [https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/](https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/)
**BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH REOPENING PLAN**

**BETHEL BAPTIST FOUR PHASE PLAN**

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Vulnerable populations include, but is not limited to:

- Individuals 65 years old and older
- Individuals with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised (such as by chemotherapy or cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy)
FAQ

How will we make sure people are not sitting too close to one another?
We will utilize the CDC recommendation of 6’ per person separation guideline. Every other pew has been blocked off for use. Family units, defined as people residing in the same home, can sit together.

What if more people show up than we can accommodate in the sanctuary?
We’ve anticipated using the Agape Center as an overflow. Essentially, people would have a group livestream experience there. Because we use chairs in that space, we can implement the 6’ per person separation guideline fairly easily.

Where do I enter?
We will limit access into the building to the front glass doors for the sanctuary and the east entrance doors. In addition, all external and internal doors will be propped open or held open by a Greeter / Deacon, to ensure a “touchless” entry.

Should I wear a mask?
The governor’s guideline says that masks are encouraged but not mandated. Information from CDC on cloth face coverings indicates wearing a mask reduces the potential for transmission of the COVID-19 virus. You are welcome to wear a mask, gloves and any other personal protective equipment that you wish. We will have a limited number of masks available for those who desire to wear one. However, recommend people bring masks with them when they enter the building.

Will the bathrooms be open?
Yes, but will be limited to two persons at a time, particularly in Phase One. We will attempt to clean handles and surfaces throughout the morning. And, of course, signage reminding folks to wash their hands.

How will the offering be received?
Offering plates will not be passed between congregants. Ushers will hold offering plates at the exit doors at the end of the service to receive the offering.

What about Communion?
Communion trays will not be passed between congregants during Phase One. When we have communion, we will provide prepackaged elements available for you to pick up as you enter the sanctuary.

Will there be Children’s Ministry available?
There will be no Children’s Ministry available during Phase One. It is not possible to ask preschoolers to social distance! As such, we have determined that our “safest” approach is to follow the lead of our Public School System. Under the White House plan, schools are allowed to reopen in Phase Two. So, we anticipate some type of return to Children’s Ministry in Phase Two, although it will be limited in scope.

Where should I park?
There are no restrictions on where people can park. Our lot is large and spacious, however please be mindful of social distancing while exiting cars to enter the building.

What happens at the conclusion of the service?
We know that you may want to stay and visit, however, you are requested to maintain social distancing while moving to your cars using any exit from the sanctuary.

Who do I contact if I have questions I need answered before returning to church?
You are encouraged to talk to your deacon or call the office with any questions.