

GBC Reopening Discussion

5/12/20

Introduction:

- This document includes both the Governor's **Religious Service Guidelines** and a Phase I discussion outline that incorporates our Team's feedback so far and the SBCV discussion guideline.
- Also, I met with Pastor Randy from Hillcrest today and he informed me that they tried to organize the logistics for an inside service and determined that it just wasn't possible to mitigate the risk factors enough to make it possible at this point.
 - He said that one of the major factors in their final decision was that if someone who attends the church tests positive for COVID-19, they will trace where they have been in the last 14 days and if that is an in-person church service, then everyone else who was present at that service may be quarantined for 14 days including their work, shopping, etc..
- Please review this document for our Zoom discussion on Tuesday May 12th at 7:00pm.
- Whatever we eventually decide will be our plan for at least the initial Phase I startup we must make every effort to inform the church. I'm considering:
 - Email, Facebook, Phone Tree, Thrive Team Calls, A video message from the Pastor on all our platforms, A video message walking people through the church and our plans
- In the first section I have prepared some Phase I suggestions for the possibility of having either an Outdoor or Indoor Service.
- In the second section I have included the suggested guidelines and mandatory requirements for religious in-person services during Phase I from the Governor's office.

I. Phase I GBC Reopening Suggestions:

a. From all of prayers and research it seems like we have two (2) main options:

- i. **Outdoor/Stream/Taped**
- ii. **Indoor/Taped**

b. Outdoor Services Option:

i. I believe that having an outdoor service should create the safest environment we can and also make our preparation and clean-up a whole lot easier:

1. The fresh moving air and families being properly distanced in their own chairs should reduce the chance for infection.

2. The only reason to go into the building would be to use the bathrooms, so we would not need to clean the entire church, mostly the bathrooms and entrance doors.
- ii. Starting the outdoor service at 10am should reduce the possibility of high temperatures and excess sun exposure, but we would run the risk of a cool morning.
- iii. An outdoor service could be held on the field on the right side of the building along the entrance road (this would allow anyone who wants to stay in their car to still hear the service).
 1. The worship team, pastor, and prayer deacon would have their backs to the church building
- iv. We could use the puppet sound system to project the music, prayer, and message out into the field
 1. I'm going to borrow an extra FM Transmitter from Hillcrest tomorrow and test it at our church.
 2. If it works, should we invest in an FM Transmitter that we would only use for a limited period of time and have no experience using (starting at \$100.00 on Amazon)???
- v. We will endeavor to keep the services to 1 hour to minimize the need for bathroom facilities and also work best with our shortened streamed platform.
 1. If we continue with abbreviated announcements, 2-3 songs, and no offering we should be able to accomplish this.
- vi. Those identified as especially vulnerable to COVID-19 should consider remaining home or at the very least in their vehicles where they can hear it on their radio or by rolling down their windows.
- vii. Those choosing to participate in the service outside their cars should bring their own chairs or blankets and position their families at least six (6) feet apart (a limited number of chairs will be made available)
- viii. Anyone outside their vehicle would be required to wear a face mask.
 1. Those leading the service should wear a face mask when they are not speaking or singing.
 2. Participants should bring their own face mask.
 3. A limited number of masks will be available for those who may not have one.
- ix. All participants should maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet apart.
 1. This requirement does not apply to family members of the same household.

- x. Because we would be outside we would probably only have one guitar player and as many singers as we have microphones for in our Puppet sound system.
- xi. We probably should not handout bulletins or hymnals or pass an offering plate
 - 1. We can email and “snailmail” bulletins and lyrics on Thursdays to allow people to bring their own
 - 2. We can continue to use online and mail-in giving while potentially providing a few places to drop an offering into four (4) sealed boxes
 - a. I’m considering asking a few carpentry minded folks in our fellowship to make 2-4 offering boxes that we could use either indoors or outdoors until we can return to “normal” hopefully sometime later this year.
- xii. We will provide hand sanitizer stations around the field.
- xiii. Restrooms will be available in case of an emergency only.
- xiv. In the event of light rain, the service will go on.
 - 1. In the case of **forecasted** heavy rain, we can switch to two indoor services on Saturday and Sunday
- xv. People should be encouraged to not linger before or after the service to reduce the possibility of infection.
- xvi. We can attempt to live-stream the Outdoor Sunday morning service again
 - 1. Being outside should improve our bandwidth
 - 2. We can instruct everyone to turn OFF their cell devices to limit the strain on the network
 - 3. The service will be recorded and could uploaded by Sunday afternoon or night to YouTube, Facebook, and DVD.

c. Indoor Services Option:

- i. We may be able to hold two (2) Indoor Services; one on Saturday afternoon (3:00pm?) and one Sunday (10am?)
 - 1. Having services on two separate days allows us to:
 - a. Properly clean the church without placing inordinate strain on the cleaning crews because another service is not directly following
 - b. Let the church air-out after the service to reduce infection
 - c. Reduce the opportunity that the 2 services will intermingle
 - d. Record the Saturday Service and have it uploaded to premiere on Sundays for those who choose to still worship from home

- ii. I have been doing some experimenting with the chairs and based on the layout of our sanctuary it appears that the highest number we could accommodate at one service is roughly 50-60 people
 1. To ensure that we have enough space and do not turn people away, we should have members and guests sign-up for a RESERVATION for which service they are going to attend during that week on a first-come, first-serve basis.
 2. We could limit the reservations to 40-50 people per Indoor Service to allow for 10 overflow guests
- iii. We could let people know that we will not be opening the church early to discourage lingering in the building (9:40am, 9:45am Sundays & 2:40pm, 2:45pm Saturdays???)
- iv. We could develop creative ways to promote social distancing while entering and leaving the church
 1. Placing cones or tape marking 6 feet distances at the entrances
 2. Asking people who are high-risk to enter and exit only through the Fellowship Hall double doors where they can watch the service at separate tables
 3. Asking different sized family groups to enter the church using various designated doors to the building/sanctuary to increase spacing and traffic flow. For example:
 - a. Having large groups enter through the double side doors of the sanctuary because I'm thinking about seating large groups in the front rows
 - b. Having groups of 3-4 people come through double doors at the far end of the building
 - c. Having groups of 1-2 people come through the main entrance under the portico
 4. Developing a ONE-WAY traffic flow.
 - a. Perhaps we enter at the main portico and exit from the sanctuary side doors or through the fellowship hall doors.
 5. Dismissing the church in sections and by various exits to reduce intermingling
- v. We would need the worship team, ushers, A/V team, and pastor to be PRESENT for both Saturday and Sunday Services.
- vi. We would need to create two (2) separate cleaning teams, one to clean after Saturday's Indoor Service and one after Sunday's
 1. We could tape off the stairs to the second floor of the building to reduce the strain on our cleaning teams

- vii. We have purchased a TV for the Fellowship Hall so any High Risk individuals who still want to attend can watch the service with a higher degree of safety
- viii. We could keep the outside doors open to the church to promote fresh air recirculating?
- ix. Anyone inside the building should be required to wear a face mask.
 - 1. Those leading the service should wear a face mask when they are not speaking or singing.
 - 2. Participants should bring their own face mask, but a limited number of masks will be available for those who may not have one.
- x. Everyone could be strongly encouraged to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet apart.
 - 1. Chairs could be arranged in groupings of 2, 3, 4, etc. “pods” spaced approximately 6 feet apart
 - 2. Signage will be created for each area/row to help people know where to sit
 - 3. This guidance does not apply to family members of the same household.
- xi. Hand sanitizer stations can be made available throughout the downstairs
 - 1. We should encourage our members to buy large hand-sanitizer containers for the church if they see one at the store.
- xii. We probably should not handout bulletins or hymnals or pass an offering plate
 - 1. We can email and “snailmail” bulletins and lyrics on Thursdays to allow people to bring their own and we can continue to use online and mail-in giving (would probably collect all Bibles and hymnals from the backs of chairs so they won’t need to be disinfected)
 - 2. Instead of passing the plate, offerings could be dropped into containers placed at the four (4) exits of the sanctuary
 - a. I’m considering asking a few carpentry minded folks in our fellowship to make four (4) offering boxes that we could use either indoors or outdoors until we can return to “normal” hopefully sometime later this year..
- xiii. We would not live-stream the Saturday Sunday Service, but instead just record it, so it can be uploaded by Sunday morning at 11am to our YouTube and Facebook platforms (DVD’s will still be made available on Mondays to those who need them).

d. Additional Questions to be Considered:

- i. Should we start-up the Nursery & Children's Church right away or get started and see what unforeseen issues arise and then phase it in?
- ii. Should we also postpone Small Groups and Sunday Schools?
- iii. Should we have some Bathroom Guidelines since it will most likely be the highest risk for cross-contamination?
 1. Suggesting limited use?
 2. Limiting to 1 family at a time (would need an "occupied" sign for the door or some way to monitor that last option)?
 3. Having a designated cleaning person for each bathroom?
- iv. Should we begin to startup the Community Groups again or wait until Phase II?
- v. Should we screen our volunteers (worship leaders, ushers, children's ministry, etc.)?
 1. Making it clear those who may be affected by COVID-19 are better serving the congregation by staying home.
 2. Taking volunteers' temperatures before the services
 3. Asking volunteers to document their health status before serving.
- vi. Should we screen our attenders?
 1. Making it clear those who may be affected by COVID-19 are better serving the congregation by staying home
 2. Taking everyone's temperature who enters the building
- vii. Should we continue our Zoom Bible Studies & AWANA Mamas?
- viii. Should we continue our Daily Zoom Devotionals?
- ix. Should we go ahead and officially postpone our VBS date into August?
 1. If we are still unable to hold a VBS, we could shift it to a back to school event.
- x. Should we consider the possibility of enlarging our foyer now (see attached conceptual artwork)?

II. Northam Religious Service Guidelines: Religious Services (20200508)

a. Phase I: Religious services must be conducted according to the following requirements.

- i. Given the public health implications of the 2020 global pandemic, the Commonwealth's diverse faith community quickly adjusted in response to this unprecedented crisis.
- ii. Therefore, it is important that the diverse faith communities in Virginia stay informed with local, state, and national officials using the links below:
- iii. [CDC's main COVID-19 Web page](#)

- iv. [Virginia Department of Health COVID-19 Web page](#)
- v. [Virginia Governor's COVID-19 Web page](#)

b. Mandatory Requirements

- i. Religious services must strictly adhere to the following requirements:
- ii. Occupancy shall be limited to no more than 50% of the lowest occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy of the room or facility in which the religious services are conducted.
- iii. Individuals attending religious services must be seated at least six feet apart at all times and must practice physical distancing at all times. Family members, as defined in Executive Order 61, Order of Public Health Emergency Three, may be seated together. Mark seating in six-foot increments.
- iv. It is recommended that persons attending religious services be encouraged to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth at all times (See [CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings guidance](#) for more detailed information.).
- v. No items must be passed to or between attendees who are not family members as defined in EO 61, Order of Public Health Emergency Three.
- vi. Any items used to distribute food or beverages must be disposable and used only once and discarded.
- vii. A thorough cleaning and disinfection of frequently contacted surfaces must be conducted prior to and following any religious services.
- viii. Post signage at the entrance that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19, or known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the prior 14 days, is permitted in the establishment.
- ix. Post signage to provide public health reminders regarding social distancing, gatherings, options for high risk individuals, and staying home if sick (samples at the bottom of this document).
- x. If any place of worship cannot adhere to the above requirements, it must not conduct in-person services. Other suggested guidance for faith communities and funeral directors can be found below.

c. Best Practices: In addition to the requirements provided above, faith communities are encouraged to utilize the following best practices to the extent they are feasible:

- i. Designate a health coordinator and/or health equity team who will be responsible for COVID-19 planning and preparation for your place of worship.
- ii. For the **building**:

1. Conduct thorough [cleaning](#) before and between services.
2. Use separate doors to enter and exit the establishment when possible.
3. Allow interior doors to remain open to limit touching of door handles.
4. Provide sanitizing stations throughout the building, particularly at entry and exit points.
5. Consider installing touchless door entry systems or providing single-use barriers (i.e., paper towels) for use in touching door and sink handles in bathroom facilities.
6. Use messaging boards or digital messaging and social media for announcements to eliminate use of bulletins and handouts.

iii. For weekly **religious services**:

1. Members are safer at home. Continue to provide and encourage use of online streaming and drive-in options for people who can utilize these options. No place of worship should feel obligated to return to in-person worship before they are ready to do so.
2. Consider holding multiple services, with time for thorough cleaning in between each service, to allow for greater distancing during services.
3. Suspend the choir as part of services.
4. Consider shorter services to avoid the need for people to use bathroom facilities.
5. Consider limiting or suspending youth services until a safer time.
6. Consider holding small group or separate services for [senior citizens and other high-risk populations](#)
7. Consider making this the first service of the week, after thorough cleaning and disinfection of facilities have been performed.
8. Ensure the use of face coverings and physical distancing is maintained between individuals at this service.
9. Ensure social distancing in parking lots or common areas.
10. Consider discontinuing use of common items (e.g., microphones, books, hymnals, scriptural texts) that may be shared between people and are difficult to clean. Consider assigning religious books to a family or individual that they can bring to each service, or use a projector for the display of sacred texts, scriptures, and songs.
11. When oils, water, ashes, or other materials are applied to a person's forehead, self-application should be used, to the extent possible.
12. Discontinue shared meals and other activities where people may gather in groups (e.g., limit or suspend coffee stations, shared food, meet and greet time before and after services etc.), with the exception of essential food services for low-income residents.

iv. **Possible methods for religious services:**

1. **Drive-in/parking lot church:** This is the safer model of religious service where social distancing may be maintained.
2. **Sign-up worship services:** This will limit the number of live worship services. Ask members, visitors, or guests to sign up for one live service per month, or every other week (in Phase 1). If needed, members can take turns between online and in-person worship services during this interim time. Allow space for impromptu visitors by registering fewer people (for each worship or religious service) than the maximum allowed per the occupancy restrictions.
3. **Multiple gatherings during the week:** A place of worship may divide the number of congregants by the maximum occupancy level and offer worship services at that level. Consider adding online services, multiple services on one day, or alternative services during the week and/or on Saturdays and Sundays.
4. **Utilize multiple methods:** As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, most places of worship lost the ability to gather in-person, but many gained a stronger online presence. Consider nurturing both aspects for at-risk individuals, as well as for the increased capacity to reach and serve those outside of the walls of the faith organization.
5. **Adult-only services:** This method asks parents of young children to alternate worship attendance (naturally reducing attendance, as one parent stays home with children).
6. **Online-only:** Take this approach if you are in a high-risk area, your place of worship is not yet prepared with the conditions outlined in the state guidelines for opening, you or a member of your family has COVID-19 symptoms, or the governing authorities have requested additional measures in the interest of public health.