



# Returning to Worship & Ministry

A Phased Approach

# Key Considerations and Priorities

- We continue to be a Christ-centered community inspiring people to find and follow Jesus.
- Despite the challenges of physical interaction, we continue to value Belonging, Knowing, Sharing and Celebrating, utilizing new tools and approaches.
- We must follow federal, state, and local mandated measures to provide a safe and healthy environment for all worshippers and demonstrate a love for our neighbors as ourselves as we protect others from infection.
- The return to “life before COVID-19” will be a long journey and will be accomplished in phases of increasing personal contact .
- A challenging aspect of recovery will be disagreements over acceptable post-COVID social norms, but as Christians we are committed to loving and grace-filled conversations.

# Phase 1 – Safer at Home

- Continue with virtual, prerecorded worship services.
- Continue to conduct meetings of councils, small groups, Bible studies, etc. remotely.
- Church building remains closed, except by approval from Ministry Council.
- Other ministries continue as able through phone calls, online meetings, etc.

# Phase 2 – Small Group Worship

- 10-15 people (TBD depending on guidance) gathering in homes for combined worship and/or Bible study; deepens relationships, meets social and spiritual needs, provides opportunity to invite someone new to join, etc.
- Prerecorded worship services will continue.
- Face masks and social distancing will be expected.
- Fixed group to minimize exposure.

# Phase 3 – Low Density Worship

- When smaller group gatherings are permitted (50 to 100 as allowed).
- Worship services will move from prerecorded to livestream and be recorded for later viewing.
- Smaller groups can attend in person on a rotating basis (care districts, alphabetical, etc.) with implementation of many the following restrictions (TBD):
  - 6' social distancing in movement and seating required (1 family per every other pew with seating at opposite ends).
  - Temperature checks before entering, hand sanitizer at the door.
  - All attendees will be required to wear a facemask, preferably their own, or else one will be provided.
  - No nursery or children's worship will be provided.
  - No greeting time, passing of offering bags, or paper bulletins.
  - Congregational singing will not be possible (even with masks).
  - An alternative communion option will be implemented (likely prepackaged elements).
  - No coffee/refreshment service.
  - Post-service interactions are discouraged unless outside and with 6' distancing.
  - Attendees age 65 or older or those with underlying health conditions are encouraged to stay at home
  - All attendees must stay home if they have had a fever within 72 hours, have a cough, or have had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 within the previous 14 days.
  - Documentation of attendees (likely a picture, etc.) to allow for contact tracing and communication in the event of confirmed infection.
- Extensive building cleaning pre and post worship will be carried out.

# Phase 4 – Higher Density Worship

- Many of the Phase 3 practices for worship will continue but with gradual easing of restrictions and increasing number of attendees.
- Smaller group in-person interactions and meetings can occur.
- Conditions will be closely monitored and we will follow recommended guidelines.
- It is possible that with outbreaks, regression to smaller groups or increased restrictions could occur for a limited duration.
- High risk individuals should continue to restrict personal interactions until preventative options are available.

# What Can You Be Doing Now?

- Commit to regular prayer for our community, local and global.
- This is an excellent opportunity to start/join a small group for support. For more information contact Kristina to start or join a small group or to invite others to join your small group.
- Contact your elder/deacon or Pastor Mike for prayer requests, benevolence needs, or pastoral care.
- Join Sunday morning “watch parties” for our service; contribute to live responses in the service.
- Continue financial support of Westwood ministries.

# References

- Christian Reformed Church [“Guidelines for West Michigan Places of Worship as the COVID-19 Pandemic Continues”](#)
- [When Your Church Reopens, Here’s How to Meet Safely](#), Christianity Today, Daniel P. Chin
- Wisconsin Council of Churches, “Returning to Church, Ministry during the COVID-19 Outbreak” April 23, 2020
- Church in Phases: A Map for Re-Launching Worship and Ministry, Blythefield CRC
- [Navigating Different COVID-19 Recovery Convictions](#), For The Church, Costi Hinn
- CDC Guidance for [Community and Faith-Based Organizations](#)
- [“Is Congregational Singing Dangerous”](#) The Gospel Coalition, Ken Boer