



“Stepping Back into Bethel” – a Plan to Restart In-Person Worship

Summary

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, Bethel will be soon stepping back to in-person worship and gatherings. Based on directives from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) “Industry Guidance for Safely Reopening...” document and in consultation with The Minnesota South District - LCMS (District), we are needing to amend long-held practices. Out of abundant love and concern for our neighbors’ health and well-being, we willingly adopt and follow the protocols outlined below.

Definitions

Seating Capacity...

Throughout the MDH’s “StaySafeMN” reopening plan phases, houses of worship have been guided to reopen at certain percentages of seating capacity.

Bethel’s listed seating capacity = 262

Therefore:

- ...at the 25% threshold (afforded by MDH beginning) = 65 participants total
- ...at the 50% threshold (beginning June 10) = 131 participants total

Staff...

For the purposes of in-person worship and gatherings, the term “staff” is defined as *any paid employee of Bethel* (e.g., pastors, Ministry Coordinator, organist, et. al.)...

...as well as *any volunteer* assisting with the conducting of that worship service or gathering (e.g., ministry team member).

Definitions (cont.)

Plan Administrator...

Per MDH guidelines, Bethel's Plan Administrator for these protocols is - Alaina Gall.

Posting of These Protocols...

Per MDH guidelines, these protocols will be available in the church office and in the Narthex for review.

2or3 Worship Media - Continued Providing of..

Bethel *remains committed to the continued production and provision* of weekly "2or3 Worship Media," even after our return to in-person worship and gatherings.

Whether needs are due to - vacation, illness, a reluctance to return to Bethel as this pandemic continues or for any other reason - Bethel desires to continue giving members and visitors options for staying connected actively to worship and gatherings at the church.

Those who have signed up to receive 2or3 Worship Media will continue to receive those resources (e.g., pre-recorded worship service, bulletin, music, et. al.) to their email inbox just as they have during the COVID shut-down.

Those who have not yet signed up - and who wish to begin receiving these resources - may do so via Bethel's website - www.bethelstpaul.com

Pre-Attendance at Worship & Gatherings

- 1) ***Self-Check for Illness...*** please stay home/do not attend if you or a member of your family are displaying signs of COVID-19 (including symptoms like: fever [> 100.4 F], cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea).
- 2) ***At-Risk Persons...*** for those with pre-existing health conditions and/or in certain age groups - know the risks and choose wisely as to whether to attend. Again, all Sunday services will continue to be provided via 2or3 Worship Media.
- 3) ***Bring a Mask & PPE...*** those attending worship and gatherings are strongly encouraged to provide and wear any mask and/or personal protective equipment (PPE) desired. Should you not have these items after you arrive, Bethel will have a limited number of masks and gloves available for your use.
- 4) ***Bring Water, Coffee & Desired Refreshments - Coffee Fellowship & Water Coolers Suspended...*** for the time being, Bethel will not be offering after-worship refreshments (e.g., coffee, treats, etc.), nor will water coolers be available for use (although, bottled water will be available as a courtesy). Attendees are welcomed and encouraged to provide any personal refreshments desired (covered containers for beverages, please) while at Bethel.

Arriving for Worship & Gatherings - Sanctuary

- 1) ***Social Distancing***...please maintain 6 feet of distance between yourself and/or your family group and others while at Bethel.
- 2) ***Pre-Service Visiting***...weather permitting, please visit with Bethel friends outside of the building. If preferred and/or necessary, please observe social distancing particularly when inside the building.
- 3) ***Enter via NE Doors*** [i.e., corner of Wheelock/Maywood]...per MDH guidelines, Bethel will be following a one-way pattern of entry to/exit from the building. Please enter the building via the NE doors.
 - a) For those members/visitors *requiring use of the ramp*...please enter the building via the SE doors [i.e., adjacent to the south parking lot].
- 4) ***Doors Propped Open***...weather permitting, doors will be propped open to allow for contactless entry. If you need to open the door, please sanitize hands prior to doing so.
- 5) ***Wash Hands Often***...using soap-and-water or hand sanitizer (offered at multiple places throughout the building).
- 6) ***Worship Bulletins & Screens***...as usual, Bethel will provide a host of bulletins in different formats (e.g., large print, complete service, abbreviated service) for your use. Complete liturgy will also be offered on screens throughout the Sanctuary.
- 7) ***Seating/Pews***...due to MDH social distancing guidelines, pew/seating access will be limited to those identified. Please only sit in those spots designated. Please observe 6 feet of separation between family groups and/or individual attendees. Family groups are welcome to sit as close to each other as desired.
- 8) ***Restrooms***...due to MDH social distancing guidelines, restroom use will be limited to two individuals or one family at a time.
 - a) ...those waiting to use the restroom are asked to queue along the wall in the upstairs hallway, using the social distancing guides marked on the floor
 - b) ...for those using private stalls, please operate the locking mechanism with tissue (discard tissue in provided wastebasket)

Arriving for Worship & Gatherings - Downstairs/Fellowship Hall

During Sundays when it is desirable to host worship downstairs/Fellowship Hall, all of the “Arriving for Worship/Gatherings - Sanctuary” protocols will be followed in addition to and/or with the following exceptions...

- 1) ***Enter via NE Doors*** [i.e., corner of Wheelock/Maywood]...per MDH guidelines, Bethel will be following a one-way pattern of entry to/exit from the building. Please enter the building via the NE doors.

Attendees are asked to enter the Fellowship Hall via the NE stairway, while maintaining appropriate social distancing going down the stairs.

For those members/visitors *requiring use of the ramp*...please enter the building via the SE doors [i.e., adjacent to the south parking lot] and enter the Fellowship Hall via the SE entrance.

- 2) **Seating**...please arrange your chair so as to maintain appropriate social distancing. While family groups may sit together at tables and/or in closer groups of chairs - please maintain at least 6 feet of distance between yourselves and other Bethel attendees.
- 3) **Restrooms**...due to MDH social distancing guidelines, restroom use will be limited to one individual or one family group at a time.
 - a) ...those waiting to use the restroom are asked to queue along the wall leading into the stairwell, using the social distancing guides marked on the floor
 - b) ...for those using private stalls, please operate the locking mechanism with tissue (discard tissue in provided wastebasket)

Arriving for Worship & Gatherings - Outdoors

During Sundays when it is desirable to host worship outdoors, all of the “Arriving for Worship/Gatherings - Sanctuary” protocols will be followed in addition to and/or with the following exceptions...

- 1) **Seating**...please arrange your chair so as to maintain appropriate social distancing. While family groups may sit together at tables and/or in closer groups of chairs - please maintain at least 6 feet of distance between yourselves and other Bethel attendees.
- 2) **Restrooms**...please use upstairs bathrooms and follow protocols listed above (“Arriving for Worship & Gatherings - Sanctuary”)

During Worship & Gatherings - All Bethel Worship Venues

- 1) **Air Flow**...weather permitting, outside doors and windows will remain open to allow for proper air circulation. Please do not close windows or doors without first consulting with staff.
- 2) **Singing**...will be celebrated in limited fashion (at first) and increased as able in consultation with MDH guidelines. Please follow the pastor’s instructions during worship.
- 3) **Offering**...will be received via plates available as you enter the Sanctuary. While we will not be passing plates during the worship service, we will commit weekly gifts to God’s use and will. As always, Bethel welcomes and is grateful for gifts/offerings made via online means.
- 4) **“Kid Zone”**...should parents need or wish to give their young children time away from the main space, while worship is underway - they are welcome to use the former WaterLife Lounge (i.e., the area with chairs just above the NW stairwell). Parents must remain with their children at all times.

Celebration & Reception of Holy Communion

While the following protocols will be updated/amended as time continues, these will guide Bethel's practice during our restart of in-person worship...

- 1) ***Follow Usher Invitation...*** to go up to receive the elements. Stay in your seat as long as possible to avoid crowding the center aisle.
- 2) ***Element Distribution...*** the bread and wine will be distributed via Intinction, thus allowing for the use of Common Cup, while minimizing contact with bread and wine for other attendees.
 - a) ...the Presiding Pastor will sanitize hands, wear glove(s) and mask for distribution of elements
 - b) ...the Presiding Pastor will dip the bread into the wine and offer both elements to recipient
 - c) ...worshippers will offer outstretched hands to receive both elements at the same time
 - d) ...juice will be available for those wishing, by notifying Presiding Pastor
 - e) ...sanitizer and/or wipes will be available for attendees to clean hands after receiving elements
 - f) ...children/those not receiving elements will be offered a verbal blessing
- 3) ***Return to Pews...*** via the side aisles

After Worship & Gatherings - Sanctuary & Downstairs/Fellowship Hall

- 1) ***Exit via SE Doors*** [i.e., adjacent to south parking lot]...as Bethel follows MDH guidelines for one-way entry/exit from the building, attendees will be ushered out of the Sanctuary or Fellowship Hall via the SE door, down the hall past Pastor Fofana's office (in the case of Sanctuary venue) and will exit the building via the SE building doors. Those requiring use of the ramp are welcome to use it.
- 2) ***After-Worship Visiting...*** weather permitting, please visit with Bethel friends outside of the building. Please observe social distancing particularly when inside the building.

Bible Studies, Weddings, Funerals

- 1) ***After Worship Bible Study...*** will continue to be postponed until further notice. Bethel members and visitors are encouraged to participate in Small Groups (particularly those offered via Zoom).
- 2) ***Weddings & Funerals...*** will be accommodated as possible, but will be limited to what these protocols can provide.

Tenants of Bethel

Those organizations renting space from Bethel will have these protocols reviewed with them (line-by-line, initially; general review monthly thereafter and/or upon revision to these protocols).

They will be required to provide documentation of who their Plan Administrator will be.

Renting organizations' Plan Administrators will be responsible for ensuring compliance with Bethel's protocols and sanitizing procedures - and will provide weekly written notification (e.g., note, email, text message) that protocols have been followed.

Training & Review

As a means of finalizing, adopting and familiarizing themselves with these protocols, all paid and volunteer staff – as well as all elected leaders and Elders – will provide emailed affirmation of review of this document.

Thereafter, all paid and volunteer staff - as well as all elected leaders and Elders - will review this document monthly.

Any amendments to this document will be communicated in writing to all Bethel paid staff, elected leaders and Elders. These amendments will be announced (verbally and/or in written form) to the congregation.

A revised version of this document will then be posted around Bethel's building.

Service Protocols - Staff

As noted earlier in this document, the following apply to Bethel paid and volunteer "staff"...

- 1) ***Pre-Service Health Assessment & Attesting***...prior to arriving at Bethel each time to serve for in-person worship and/or gatherings, all staff will:
 - a) ...review the "Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist"
 - AND
 - b) ...stay home from service if symptoms are present OR if a member of household is presenting symptoms

Attendance at Bethel for service on any day will be considered affirmative attesting by that staff member that symptoms are not present.

- 2) ***Staff with Positive COVID-19 Test Results***...and/or who have a member of household with a positive COVID-19 test result will not come to Bethel nor will serve until the following is accomplished...
- 3) ***Return to Service***...will not be permitted until an MDH or CDC approved quarantine period has been followed successfully. Refer to <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf> for guidelines.

- 4) ***Staff Who Display Symptoms at Bethel...*** will be isolated immediately (as necessary) and sent home as soon as possible.
 - a) ...any action required in #2, 3 and/or 4 - will be communicated with (at minimum) Bethel's Congregation President and Senior Pastor;
 - b) ...any action required in #2, 3 and/or 4 - may be communicated by Bethel's Congregation President and/or Senior Pastor at their discretion.
- 5) ***Identification to Possible Contact with Sickened Staff...***referencing "CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses..." (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>) either Congregation President and/or Senior Pastor will follow protocols and notify paid and/or volunteer staff as guided.
- 6) ***Communication by Staff in Reporting of Symptoms...***is to be made to the Congregation President and/or Senior Pastor via email or text message.
- 7) ***Sick Leave Policies for Paid Staff...***in the event Bethel paid staff need to quarantine, full pay will continue to be offered as long as staff members agree to accomplish a reasonable amount of agreed upon work via electronic means. Support will be provided to encourage paid staff to accomplish work during quarantine.

Office Protocols - Staff

All paid and volunteer staff will observe the following protocols while working at Bethel...

- 1) ***Social Distancing...***staff will observe proper social distancing while working.
- 2) ***Hand Washing...***staff will routinely wash and/or sanitize hands while working.
- 3) ***Deliveries - Reception of...***staff will observe social distancing, will utilize contactless delivery wherever possible and will minimize use of scanners, styluses and/or other delivery personnel tools where required.

General Building Protocols

- 1) ***Signage...***from MDH/CDC (Centers for Disease Control) regarding hand-washing, social distancing, etc. will be prominently posted around the building.
- 2) ***Cleaning - Weekly (Worship space)...***Bethel will continue to contract with professional cleaning service for weekly cleaning/sanitizing.
- 3) ***Cleaning - Between Services (Worship space)...***Bethel will train and utilize volunteer staff to sanitize surfaces between in-person worship services.

- 4) ***Ventilation...*** weather permitting, Bethel will keep windows and outside doors open to maximize fresh air throughout usable space.
- 5) ***Review of MDH “Industry Guidance...” - “Building and Ventilation Protocols” [pp. 3-4]...*** will be reviewed once monthly by Bethel Building Manager and Congregation President and/or Senior Pastor to ensure most current best practices are being followed.
- 6) ***Review of MDH “Industry Guidance...” - “Work and Gathering Space Cleaning...” [pp.4-5]...*** will be reviewed once monthly by Bethel Building Manager and Congregation President and/or Senior Pastor to ensure most current best practices are being followed.

Specific Building Protocols

- 1) ***Sanitizing Spaces after Staff/Attendee with COVID Symptoms...*** will be conducted as soon as possible. Until sanitization can be accomplished, the area will be shut off from all other use.
 - a) Sanitizing of space in question will be accomplished following guidance from CDC document “Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility” (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>)