



“Stepping Back into Bethel” – Revised Protocols (June 2, 2021)

Approved by Leadership Team - June 2, 2021

Summary

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, Bethel continues to worship and fellowship in partnership with the Minnesota South District (LCMS) and the guidance from Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Continuing to operate in a spirit of love and concern for our neighbors’ well-being, we amend our previous operational protocols to be as follows:

Seating

There are no longer any capacity limits, indoors or outdoors, for houses of worship.

The MDH recommends those attendees from different households maintain social distance.

Masking

Because Bethel thrives in our congregational singing of hymns and liturgy;

...AND because it is prudent for Bethel to presume that a mixture of vaccinated and unvaccinated attendees may be singing during worship;

...following MDH guidance, they therefore *recommend all attendees wear masks when singing communally.**

*MDH guidance notes: “When conducting activities that involve risk of COVID-19 transmission, such as congregational singing, faith-based settings with mixed populations of vaccinated and unvaccinated people should recommend that attendees wear face coverings. At minimum, these settings should create an environment that supports those who want to wear a face covering. This is especially important when some attendees have weaker immune systems or are at high risk of infection and severe disease.”

Further MDH guidance (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html>) notes :

Re. unvaccinated people: *“People who are not vaccinated, including children, are not required to wear face coverings indoors or outdoors by state executive order, but are at risk for getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **strongly recommend** (MDH emphasis) that anyone who is not fully vaccinated continue to wear face coverings indoors in businesses, public settings, and when around people from other households, as well as outdoors when social distancing cannot be maintained.”*

Re. vaccinated people: *“People who are fully vaccinated are not required to wear face coverings indoors or outdoors.”*

Re. immunocompromised individuals: *“People with weakened immune systems, even if fully vaccinated, should consult their health care provider for specific recommendations. The protection they get from COVID-19 vaccines may not be as strong as for people with stronger immune systems.”*

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 Water, Coffee & Desired Refreshments - Coffee Fellowship & Water Coolers Suspended...*** as soon as possible Bethel will return to these refreshments. Until that time, attendees are welcomed and encouraged to provide any personal refreshments desired while at Bethel.

While at Church

- 1) ***Keep Hands Clean...*** wash your hands often with soap & water and/or use hand sanitizer.
- 2) ***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.

During Worship & Gatherings - All Bethel Worship Venues

- 1) ***Air Flow...*** weather permitting, windows will remain open to allow for proper air circulation. Please do not close windows without first consulting with staff.
- 2) ***Offering...*** will continue to be received via plates available as you enter the Sanctuary.

Celebration & Reception of Holy Communion

Beginning June 20, Bethel will return to the following Communion practices:

- 1) ***Pre-Sacrament Preparation...*** the Presiding Pastor will continue his practice of sanitizing hands and wearing a mask for distribution.
- 2) ***Reception of Elements...*** worshippers will have the option of receiving the elements via:
 - a) ...Intinction (i.e., the bread dipped into the wine and together dropped into hand), OR;
 - b) ...Individual Elements (i.e., reception of bread followed by selection of individual cup).

At this time, Common Cup will not yet be reintroduced.

Tenants of Bethel

Those organizations renting space from Bethel will have these protocols reviewed with them (line-by-line, initially; general review periodically 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.

Protocol Review

Bethel elected leaders and Senior Pastor will continue to regularly review these protocols along with MDH guidance for amendment and implementation.