

RETURN TO MLC

As we prepare to slowly begin the process of meeting together again, the staff and leadership of Messiah have discussed best practices and next steps for this transition. After much prayer, research, and in the spirit of following the guidelines set up by our state, federal, and local governments, we have decided to adhere to the following guidelines regarding our four-tier ministry focus, church cleaning, building use, communication and worship times. We will be following the *Restore Illinois* guidelines and praying for an exemption or further guidelines for houses of worship.

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spring 2020 - Electronic Connections – Our emphasis will be online worship and keeping connected electronically. Please invite family and friends to be a part of what your church is doing online and ask questions about their experience. Consider expanding your quarantine family to include fellowship ministry in your backyard/driveway house church. **This is in accordance and conjunction with the state's roll out of phase two.**

Summer 2020 - Life Groups – We will move our emphasis to volunteers and small groups. We will rebuild the fellowship and service of *life groups* in the church building using social distancing and size restrictions. Please invite family and friends to be a part of a service group or small group activity. Perhaps start with social events in your backyard like *VBS in a bag* or roasting smores. We will hold occasional outdoor/drive-in worship. The first of these events, a drive-in worship service, will be Wednesday, June 3rd. **This is in accordance and conjunction with the state's roll out of phase three.**

Mid-Summer or Fall 2020 - Medium-Size Groups – We will have an emphasis on large group worship and fellowship. Group sizes may still be limited. The invitation for a new believer is still through your home or service group. Once people show an interest in talking about God, people can invite them to be a part of worship. **This is in accordance and conjunction with the state's roll out of phase four.**

Return to Full Fellowship - Hopefully by the beginning of the fall season we will be able to plan a Rally Days celebration with an outside worship service and celebration. Any protocols and attendance quotas at this point will be **in accordance and conjunction with the state's roll out of phase five.**

CHURCH CLEANING

During this time, cleanliness is of utmost concern. We have taken several steps to ensure that our facility is clean and safe. To that end, we have many hand sanitizer stations around the building to provide availability. We have also contracted with our janitorial company to provide a thorough cleaning with a unique product that is designed to kill the Coronavirus. This cleaning includes, but is not limited to: door handles and knobs, door panic bars, window ledges, washrooms, water fountains and garbage cans. These areas will continue to kill bacteria for up to thirty days.

BUILDING USE

- At phases three and four, we will be practicing **social distancing**, keeping the following guidelines in mind:

- Please try to keep a space of six feet between you (and whoever has come with you) and others when gathered.
- When entering leaving, please attempt to maintain a distance that is appropriate and within the spirit of social distancing.
- People are encouraged to wear masks while around others.
- Our **programming** will reflect phase three and four guidelines as well.
 - No service groups of more than ten during phase three.
 - No food or drink service, at least initially, during phase four.
 - There will be a season of family worship during phase four. This means that families will be encouraged to worship together. There will be no childcare or Sunday school (see below for family worship suggestions).
 - No considering of rental of the building for non-member groups until phase four.
 - No meetings of groups of more than fifty during phase four (see below for phase four worship protocols).

COMMUNICATION

- We will communicate, at length, our new guidelines via the usual outlets. There will be signs indicating these guidelines at church entrances. These signs will encourage mask usage, encourage family worship, maintenance of social distance, and keeping potential illnesses at home.
- We will emphasize electronic communication. This means we will print a minimal number of bulletins, reserved for those who are leading or involved in the service. Bulletins will still be available online.
- There will be no pencils, cards, hymnals or Bibles in the pews initially.
- As a leadership and staff, we will continually communicate such that our understanding of these protocols is the same.
- We will communicate to congregants that we will have had a doctor review our protocols and recommendations.

INDOOR AND OUTDOOR WORSHIP

In our worship times, it is paramount that we consider not only how we feel about engaging with others, but how they feel about it as well. The apostle Paul encouraged the church at Rome to “do whatever leads to peace and mutual edification” (Romans 14:19). In that spirit, we are asking our worship attenders to remember the following when in attendance during worship:

- Service protocols
 - General protocols
 - Baptisms will still be performed in the manner parents request them.
 - Weddings and funeral attendance will be in groups of 10 throughout the building.
 - Phase four worship service protocols
 - People will enter the building with social distancing protocols in place.

- Offering will be accepted at the beginning or end of the service in a box located on the usher's table.
 - Communion will be served by taking your own self-service communion cups on tables located in the narthex.
 - Congregants are encouraged to wear masks when attending church.
 - Overflow seating will be available after we obtain the threshold of safe, social distancing attendance.
 - We will implement a reservation system for each service if needed.
 - The timing of our services will remain the same. Because of this, we ask that people vacate the church within a reasonable amount of time to minimize overlap interaction with the next service attendees.
 - No food service initially.
 - There will be no greeting time in worship. We encourage you to find time for fellowship in small groups outside of worship. Please be conscious of social distancing and face masks as you greet others before and after worship.
 - We are asking our greeters to hold the door open (wearing face masks) if they serve.
 - There will be no choir but we encourage special music in smaller groups and continued fellowship among musicians.
- Family Worship
 - We are intentionally moving our children's ministry into worship until students can return to school. Student ministry (6-12th) programming will gather with precautions.
 - For now, we want to encourage parents to consider bringing their children to service instead of staying home.
 - There will be no nursery or childcare provided until stage 5.
 - We encourage young families and children to stay connected through worship and small groups.