



BREESPORT BAPTIST CHURCH

Regathering of the Saints

Abstract

This document describes the various procedures for insuring that the church is a safe place to Worship during the commercial reopening period.

Pastors

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Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ is a 2000-year-old institution made up, universally, of believers spanning continents, countries, ethnicities, languages, cultures, and sub-cultures. The Christian faith has transformed the lives of countless billions of people over those many centuries. It has impacted culture, science, the arts, and done more to champion the nobility of the marginalized and the downtrodden than any other force in the history of the world. In that sense it is unique from any other human institution and it provides unique services to its adherents and communities.

One of its central tenants is the belief that those who claim faith in Jesus Christ are commanded to assemble for the purposes of sacred worship, fellowship, instruction, and encouragement. This has historically happened on the first day of each week in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We know this day as Sunday.

We have willingly suspended those precious gatherings for the common good throughout these last weeks and months. We are now thankful to regather, in compliance with federal, state, and local guidance in mind to ensure, as best we can, the safety of all those who would choose to gather with us. To that end, we humbly and gladly submit the following action plan to every interested party so that we all might both understand and comply with the steps herein for the purpose of continued compliance, the ability to continue meeting, and our mutual safety.

Plan

This follows the format of the communications issued by Chemung County on May 11, 2020.

- I. Adjust workplace hours and shift design as necessary to reduce density in the workplace
 - A. Modify the number of services to reduce the building loading
To reduce the number of people in the building and enable the implementation of social distancing, Breesport Baptist Church (BBC) will increase the number of services as needed. While the worship center is a significant size room, maintaining six feet between attenders will require us to expand the number of Worship Services to 2 or potentially more or seek other solutions. Given that we normally would have about 300 people in the building on a Sunday pre-pandemic, we would expect to be able to get by with 2 services for quite some time.
 - B. Maintain a rigid schedule for the Worship Services
It is normal for us to encourage people to stay at the church for as long as they would like to enjoy being with one another. In order to ensure that we can control the number of people in the building, the first service will be held to a maximum of 90 minutes in order to give time for the first service to exit the worship center before the second service attenders enter the worship center. If multiple services are used, maintain a 30 minute turn-over time to escort the first service attenders out and bring in the next group of attenders.
 - C. Simplify the ministries held on each Sunday
Sunday's will have only Worship Services. There will be no Adult Bible Fellowship, Teen, Youth or Children Sunday Schools held. Neither will there be any in-church family groups held after the worship service.
 - D. Continue to provide online options
It is expected that there will be many in our congregation who may decide to remain at home due to their own health or the health of someone in their family. We will continue our on-line services including the worship services and the family groups and teen group services to aid those who will not be able to come to the church building but who desire to worship with others.

II. Enact social distancing protocols

The church will be divided into three main areas. These will be: Restricted or locked and only to be accessed by leadership for emergency or necessity; Non-Distanced where masks must be worn; and Distanced, areas where six foot distances are maintained and masks may be removed, but must be on if entering or leaving the room. Signage will be posted to identify the protocol for each area type in that specific areas.

A. The worship center will have seating placed in such a way that families or those who are sheltering together away from the church can sit shoulder to shoulder, but the seating itself will not be allowed with less than six feet distance from other family or shelter units in all directions. Once a person is in their assigned area in this Distanced area, they may remove the masks or continue to wear them.

1. Masks must remain in place until seated in the distanced seating
2. Deacons, trustees, pastors, or their spouses or individuals selected specifically by the pastors will be named ushers and will escort each family unit from the entry door to their seating area and ensure that each person is comfortable and there is six feet of space between the family and the next family. If attenders are not yet available, they will ensure that space is left for those who will be coming later. Last minute changes will be discouraged but can be done with the help of an appointed usher.
3. To ensure that there is six feet between people, only every other row of seats will be used in a service and at least 4 seats or an aisle and 1 or 2 seats (depending on the width of the aisle) will exist between families. If there are two services, the second service will use the rows which were not used in the first service. Three or more services in the worship center are not envisioned at this time.
4. People will be allowed to leave the service for personal reasons, but they must ensure they have their mask on before leaving their seat and must leave their mask on until they return to their seat. If someone leaves the service, it is expected under most circumstances they will return to their first seat only or else leave to sit in their car. Exceptions will be made if someone is ill or is dealing with a child, and they may be seated elsewhere by an usher if necessary.

5. The group can stand and sit at their seat as a part of the Worship Service, but they should not move to other areas.

6. When the service is over, the auditorium will be cleared quickly and orderly by the ushers who will dismiss the rows to specific exits or service areas.

7. Stage setup in the worship center will be designed to maintain social distancing between musicians and pastors. At least 6 linear feet will be maintained between the stage or stage area and the first row of attenders.

8. Access to the sound booth will be restricted such that there is six foot of distance between the technicians in the booth. The technicians in the booth will wear their masks before the service begins, during the turn-over between services and after the service has ended but the room still has attenders in it. Otherwise, they can remove their masks if they wish.

B. All other areas of the church will require masks. These include but are not limited to hallways, restrooms, meeting rooms which do not have 'distanced' seating employed, parking lots when outside of personal cars, sidewalks, and gymnasium.

1. Ushers or greeters will be at entry doors to open and close the doors for attenders to minimize direct contact transfer on door handles.

2. Sanitizers will be available at all entries should someone become contaminated before entering or after leaving the worship center.

3. Water fountains will be closed to reduce direct contact areas.
4. If people should become queued waiting at the entry doors, they will be asked to form a line on the sidewalk spacing six feet between family units until they get to the usher. Masks will be required during this time.
5. Restrooms will all become single use restrooms. Cleaning supplies will be in the restrooms and each person will be asked to clean off any place they have touched before leaving the room. Instructions will be placed in all restrooms to wash hands and clean touch points.

C. Some aspects of the services and building will be modified to help control any contact contamination.

1. Areas of the church that will not be directly used for Worship Services or in support of the worship center, or areas used for ingress and egress from the worship center will be closed and where possible locked.
2. Do not hold Sunday School services until it is determined safe to do so.
3. Children's ministries including nursery and teen ministries will not be held until it is determined safe to do so or until they are modified to be safe (teens can continue to meet on-line).
4. Individual communion cups with packaged crackers will be used and will not require contact to distribute. No bulletins or other printed matter will be distributed to the congregation.
5. Parents must keep track of their children until age 17 and they must be in their control or in the control of another adult who the parents have chosen. Children, even teens should not be congregating in the halls.
6. Chlorine will be added to baptism water should a baptism service be held during these controlled phases.

7. The 'Candy Man' and 'Coffee Corner' ministries will be suspended until it is deemed safe to restore them.

8. Ushers are responsible for first contact with anyone who refuses to wear a mask in the mask areas. If they cannot persuade the attender or volunteer to wear a mask in un-distanced space, or stay in their distanced seating; then, they will ask them to leave the church building or grounds as appropriate. Note for those who have a medical condition concerning masks, we will ask them to remain socially distanced from everyone except their family to the extent they can do that. Once that condition is expressed, ushers will move to expedite the transport of those individuals to the distanced areas for quick seating, by-passing queues and potentially using restricted portions of the facility to move people to and from the masked areas to maintain six foot distances as possible.

III. Restrict non-essential travel for employees – No traveling for training, mission trips or other events sponsored by the church until safe to do so. Meetings of the church will continue to be held with on-line access provided, providing an alternative to travel.

IV. Require all employees and customer to wear masks if in frequent contact with others or if a six-foot social distance cannot be maintained – see section 2B.

V. Implement strict cleaning and sanitation standards

A. Add washroom postings for hand washing.

B. Ensure sanitizing gels and wipes are available at entrances of the worship center.

C. Ensure disinfectant is used on touch points including but not limited to door handles; giving boxes; work surfaces (tables, sound equipment, video equipment, microphones, etc.); before and after service use.

D. Vacuum rugs and soft surfaces. Only use the worship center on Sunday mornings.

E. Close the church kitchen.

F. Disinfect touch points in the restrooms before each service starts and at the end of the last service of the day. Inspect restrooms to see if they need care every half hour during the service times. Ask each person using the restrooms to clean touch points as they leave.

VI. Enact a continuous health screening process for individuals to enter the workplace, some businesses may want to enact temperature checks as an added precaution

A. All staff will maintain health logs and share with the pastors. We have focused on staff here as they will be the ones who meet the bulk of the people.

B. Review current health status with ushers weekly and make reassignments or substitutions, as necessary.

C. It is not believed that temperature monitoring of attendees will be necessary. It will be communicated that if anyone is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms including high temperatures, they should not attend the service.

VII. Continue tracing, tracking, and reporting of cases

A. Take the roll at each service to know who was there in case of any need to know for later tracing. To protect the privacy of our attenders, these rolls will only be available to the pastors and will be destroyed no sooner than 14 days after the service, and not longer than 30 days after.

B. Direct each attender to inform the church office if they have symptoms and encourage them to have testing done. Direct all attenders to not attend if they have any symptoms or have had testing which is positive.

C. Pastors are responsible for ensuring that any positive cases are reported to the Health Department. They are also responsible for confronting anyone who tries to come to the church during service who has a confirmed case or suspected infection and establishing methods to meet their spiritual or mental needs without coming to the services.

VIII. Develop Liability processes

We believe that our largest liability is due to the lack of clear information about the disease, symptom, and risks of the virus. To mitigate this liability, we will develop specific information education about the procedures and why they are being asked for. We will also ask those who are in anyway compromised or is caring for anyone who is compromised to stay home and attend services on-line for safety. We will also keep county progress available in our normal communication channels.

We will improve the monitoring and reporting of the mental and physical health of our congregation through these Worship Services as well as the close relationships in the church.

To test our plan, we will schedule a trial run the Sunday before allowing the full church to return. All ushers, greeters, and other people who may be identified to make this plan work will be in place along with some specific invited worshipers and the trial will be used for training. We will also do a debrief of all those who participate for collecting suggested changes to the plan and readiness evaluation for the actual first regathered service.

Conclusion

We understand and are thankful for the efforts put forth by our government to deal with this pandemic. Certainly, in some high population areas such as New York City these steps were critical. The lives saved and the hardships endured was significant. We are glad to see that there is an easing of restrictions in the less populated areas and an improvement in outcomes for patients even in the high-density areas. Now is the time to prepare for being able to help people to get back to doing what God has ordained them to do, whatever role that is. For our members and our community, we believe that being able to worship our God together and continue our faith practices to the extent possible with safety will pay back huge dividends not only to our members, but to our community at large. With proper communication, execution, and adherence to this plan, we believe that Sunday Services can be held face-to-face with minimum risk to our attenders, volunteers, and staff.

It is our goal as church to regather our congregation to worship God while showing all respect and submission to those who are in government and those in the health industry who have advised the government. In this manner, we hope to be a positive testimony in our community and within our church family.

We will give training to the ushers and other key resources before holding the service.

We have discussed this plan with the Chemung County Executive and it is on file in his office.