

What will church look like when we return?

The general consensus is to meet outside as the COVID numbers continue to rise. There are challenges to outdoor services such as the summer heat, poor air quality on hot days, the need for a PA system, and seating. However, our chances of getting COVID decreases greatly and we do not have to disinfect an entire church.

It has come to my attention that many of you are afraid of returning to church and have concerns about even coming to an outdoor service.

I read a wonderful analogy I want to share to hopefully ease some of your fears.

Think of COVID germs like each person is smoking. When you are in a room with poor ventilation the smoke accumulates quickly and you are breathing in each other's smoke. Open a window or two and you decrease the smoke in the room. Go outside and the smoke decreases substantially as it dissipates into the air.

Adding masks and staying 6 feet apart outdoors, decreases your chances of inhaling "the smoke"/COVID germs even more.

When I entered the church this week to prepare it for worship - before new mandates from the UMC came out - I was surprised at the feelings I encountered. I had entered the church when it was empty on many occasions but this time something was eerily missing. I still felt God there. He was pushing me to complete my tasks. I know he is with us where ever we are. However, "For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." Matthew 18:20. I realized what was missing was the love of God's people that lingers in the air after we are gone. We meet on Zoom and watch our sermons on the internet, we pray at home, but something is missing. I feel driven to get us going again, out of our pajamas on Sunday mornings, maybe just into a pair of shorts, but to come together

in Jesus name to make us strong and face our fears together, SAFELY! and to spread that love into our communities again.

The numbers of COVID cases is increasing in some “hotspots” across North Carolina, however, as I continue to monitor the case numbers in our zip codes there have been only a few added cases. For example, the Brown Summit zip code of 27214 has had 1 death since this began and the June numbers are as follows 6/9 - 18, 6/14 - 24, 6/18 - 31 and 6/30 - 40 cases. A slow rise but not a big jump in numbers. The number of deaths due to COVID are continuing to decrease across the country, the primary age of sick individuals is now under 50 years of age and their cases are usually mild cases.

I struggle with my own fears during this pandemic, yet, God reminds me frequently through out his word “Fear not. ” How do we overcome that fear, or the fear of unknowingly giving the disease to a high risk individual. We pray and ask God to guide us. If you feel driven as I do, and confident that following the guidelines will keep you safe, please join us at our first outdoor service. If you pray and the Holy Spirit continues to say stay at home, do so.

What will church look like when we return? Friendship and Brown Summit church board members have met several times to discuss the safety of our sanctuaries. Each church has their own special needs according to congregation and architectural design of the churches.

Remember you attend services at your Own Risk we have followed CDC and the UMC guidelines for your safety .

Outdoor worship (If implemented) :

Friendship will host outdoor worship for both churches. The service will be behind the church on the concrete pad.

1. Masks will be required.
2. Social distancing of 6 feet for non-family members is required.
3. You will need to provide your own chair.
4. A volunteer will direct where to place your chair.
5. There will be no singing.
6. At present there is not a plan for staying in your car to listen to the sermon.
7. If you are sensitive to the heat and have issues with code orange days with poor air quality please stay at home and continue to view the sermon on line. (Cooler days are coming)
8. No restroom will be available unless it is a dire emergency. A volunteer designated for questions will be identified at the beginning of the service and will open the appropriate door for you to enter.
9. Children need to remain with their families at all times.
10. Hand sanitizer will be available and masks if needed.
11. Any socializing will require you to remain 6 feet apart and your designated volunteer will remind you if needed.

The basic plan for Indoor worship (upon approval of the UMC) is as follows:

1. ALL congregants must wear a mask. If you do not have one, one will be provided.
2. A trained volunteer will direct you to the first station (location will vary according to church) where you will have your temperature checked and verify you have no symptoms or have been knowingly exposed to COVID in the last 14 days.
3. You will sign in each member of your family at the next station. Brown Summit members will sign in at their pew. This is for contact tracing if someone becomes sick. A sanitized pen will be provided to sign in.
4. Before entering the church you will go to the hand sanitizer station and sanitize your hands for 30 seconds before being seated.
5. A trained volunteer will direct you to your pew. Family members that live together may all sit on the same pew.
6. Every other pew has been cordoned off, so there will be an empty pew row in front and behind you.
7. Hand sanitizer is available at each pew.
8. All hymnals, bibles, paper and pencils have been removed from the sanctuary. Please feel free to bring your own bible.
9. There will be no singing because of the increase aerosol transmission of viral particles.
10. There will be no children's church provided.
11. One bathroom will be provided for emergencies. The women's bathroom has been designated as the unisex bathroom. Sanitize your hands before entering the restroom

- for 30 seconds. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with the soap provided for 20 seconds before exiting the restroom.
12. When church has ended each row starting in the back of the church will exit as directed by a volunteer.
 13. Use hand sanitizer as you exit the church so that you may take your mask off with clean hands when you reach your car.
 14. Socializing outside will require social distancing and continuing to wear your mask.
 15. Trained volunteers will then disinfect the church of commonly touched spaces with an EPA approved disinfectant for COVID-19.
 16. An added note: The church will then remain vacant for 7 days. The CDC notes that after 7 days a building does not require sanitization but we are going the extra step and disinfecting.
 17. Holy Sacrament of Communion will be held in your pews with disposal bread and wine packets.

Dawn Hall, RN, BSN
Faith Community Nurse