

Some Questions We Need To Know Before Returning To Our Facility

The country is slowly reopening, and this includes your house of worship, NorthBridge Church.

We will not be able to go back to “business as usual” immediately, however. If you think we’ll all rush back to church and pick up where we left off, don’t kid yourself – for everyone’s safety it can’t happen. We need to think and plan carefully so we do not endanger people simply because we let our guard down and believe that the Coronavirus crisis had passed. Now, as believers let’s agree to live by faith and not operate in fear, but let’s also agree to be proactive and to act in wisdom towards our members and guests, especially those among us who are most susceptible to becoming infected with COVID-19.

In the short time preparing for the return of the church to the church campus, we have had many talks with our leaders. As we have listened to friends and ministry experts over the past several weeks, we’ve compiled a list of things that will affect you when returning. Here are 20 questions we have asked ourselves in preparing for your physical return to the NorthBridge Campus.

What if our worship gathering is initially limited to no more than 50 people? While we are not limited in number, for right now, we must social distance. This means families can sit together, but each family needs to space out. We will reset our room to allow for this. We will add space into our café for people to have more room in worship. In the early stage of opening, we will probably have to add a third service to accommodate until the social distancing eases a bit. **It looks like services will be offered at 9, 10:15 and 11:30.** We will manage the head count by using a sign-up website to reserve seats for families. We might not have room in the service time you would prefer; please be flexible. We will then RSVP at the end of each service for the following week, you won’t have to access a website each week if you would prefer not to. And remember this is only

for a short season. We hope to be back to two services and more people in each service ASAP.

What adjustments will we make to the Lord's Supper and baptism?

We will not be able to host the Lord's Supper as we typically do. We will use self-contained juice and cracker cups when we celebrate this Holy time. With baptism, we will monitor our community and the level of concern at any given time to make adjustments on a case by case basis. It ultimately will come to the comfort level of the individual, their family and the person baptizing.

What will our summer ministry schedule look like for youth and children's camps? The decision to hold camps is out of our hands, but we have to decide if we want to encourage our families to send their kids to camp. When it comes to children, we would recommend that you pay attention to Springfield Public Schools. If they cancel summer schools during the month of camp, we probably should not partake in camps. We will also not attempt to host a summer Bible club or daylong Bible camps for children during this season.

How will we handle counting and maintaining our high standard of accountability in regards to accounting for tithes and offering? We already have security protocols that have long been in place. We will continue these, with the addition of some line of site social distancing. The counters will use gloves and Lysol the incoming envelopes. Clean envelopes will be made available and spread across the table for givers to pick up a single envelope. You will be able to then drop your check or cash into the offering box without touching anything. Sterile pens will be provided and the giving kiosk will be wiped down between each service.

What are we doing now to sanitize and sterilize our church campus?

Tyler has been and will continue to be deep cleaning and disinfecting our church. We also have had the carpets cleaned and sterilized before the building has reopened to the public. We will regularly sanitize our chairs and carpet on a weekly basis from now until the threat is passed us.

Are we going to continue offering KidsZone? As a short-term alternative, family worship will be held as *the* primary option in these COVID-19 days. Parents should take their kids to worship, practice physical distancing, and

keep a close eye on your little ones. We hope to begin KidsZone as soon as possible. We will be monitoring schools, social distance easement and what for profit businesses that cater to kids do in the days to come to inform us of when it is best to open KidsZone.

Will nursery be provided? Based on what we are hearing from CDC, Greene County Health and our own insurance, it is not a wise idea to provide this ministry at this point. Once KidsZone is reopened, we hope to start having our 3 to pre-K kids meeting in nursery. After social distancing is eased, where volunteers can hold and carry little ones, we will then reopen the younger nursery.

Are we continuing to provide hospitality on campus? Our café area will be slightly altered to ease the social distancing in our worship area. We ask that people do not cluster around the food bar as we normally do to allow people to be served and then move to their seats. For the time being, there will be no self-serve options. Instead, the hospitality team will serve your coffee and food choices directly to you. They will be gloved during their time serving you. There will be limited food options during this time to keep the choices simple and quick to help with wait times. Hospitality will wipe down their surfaces between each service.

Will we continue offering the new options for virtual online worship? We expanded our offerings to include streaming to Facebook Live. We will keep streaming, that has been and will continue to be a viable alternative for our members. It is also a great opportunity to share who we are to our community and those who want to check us and our message out in the safety of their home.

What about volunteers who need to resign? Some of our older adults and compromised volunteers might feel uncomfortable serving in a high touch capacity, especially in the areas of greeting, child care and hospitality. We totally understand this concern and bless our people to step aside for a time or even permanently. This means two things: 1.) Those who are stepping aside need to find a place to serve. Maybe in an area that is low touch and low contact. Step up in our prayer ministry for example. It is important that all members continue to contribute and serve where they can for their spiritual health. And 2.) **Our young adults are going to need**

to step up in powerful ways to ensure ministry is happening during our services, especially if several step away from greeting or working with our children.

What's our strategy to clean and sanitize our church in real time? It's one thing to prepare in advance for the return to the church building, but how will we keep the place clean and disinfected on a Sunday? Our hospitality will clean surfaces and our greeters will clean high touch areas on the way to worship. We will have hand sanitizer available. Remember to use it frequently to keep your hands clean while in the church building. This will go a long way in spreading germs and viruses.

Will door greeters be present? The new normal will be for greeters to stand back six feet, inside the church building, and welcome people verbally without opening the door for them. You experience that at big box stores now. A greeter is there to say hello, but they don't make you pass within a foot of them. A greeter will be available to answer the questions of a guest, but they will not take guests to meet the pastor or move them unnecessarily to different part of the building. The doors will be propped open to keep handling them to a minimum.

Is this the time to suspend or end our church's "meet and greet" time? The answer is yes, at least temporarily. We will recognize and welcome our people verbally, but we will not have a meet and greet time for a season in our worship time. (I know some of you are so happy right now.)

Because people may return very slowly to church, how will we count attendance and effectiveness? We will pay attention to our online traffic and attendance. We recognize those families are experiencing our teaching and worship in powerful ways also.

Should we add and/or shorten worship services to allow for social distancing? I touched on this in #1 above, but let's drill down a bit. If physical gatherings are limited in size, we have a few options: we will limit the capacity of our seating, by removing and distancing chairs. We also are going to convert part of our café to be a place for young families to be able to sit. Our services will remain the same time length we have set while we have been away. And with the most stringent of social distancing rules and

requirements in place, we see no other option in the meantime but to offer three live services.

How will we distribute material to the large group? As we give out resources, we will keep in mind that people need to pick up their own material instead of it being handed to them. If someone is handing material out, they will wear appropriate gloves and follow the social distancing norms that many will expect when coming to church. There will be no bulletins printed, and announcements will come through our social media platforms.

Do we have a plan for reducing expenses if our church's offerings begin to flatten? This is the time for a "budget scrub" – while offerings are still strong and expenses have been lowered because of reduced activities, we need to be thinking, "What if..." – what if our offerings don't hold steady because of rising unemployment of members? We know God is in control and has plans to bless the church and the people who make up the church. We also know that God has us go through the same trials the world goes through as a witness to His grace and glory. Know that our finance team looks every month at our numbers and our bills. Finances are always fluid and our team is prepared to be proactive and not reactive.

Should we be investing in new digital equipment right now? Yes, most of our equipment for the iCampus was dated and aged well before this event. Now everyone is seeing the limitations of our equipment. We have done some cabling things to improve sound quality, we have changed out some software, and started using a new streaming platform. Most recently have added much needed new cameras to improve the visual experience of our streaming ministry.

This list of questions is not exhaustive. It's representative of many things our leaders have been thinking about right now before we get the OK from government leaders to gather again.

Should you have questions or concerns that we have not covered do not hesitate to talk to one of our pastors or our leadership team members. We would be happy to think on or consider anything you bring to us.