

Church Council Notes on Returning to In-Person Worship
Tuesday, June 16th

The GSELC Church Council met on Tuesday, June 16th to review guidelines for returning to in-person worship. Our top priority is the safety of ALL people, especially those who are by definition considered to be of high risk, those who are 65 or older and/or have a health condition. It is recommended for both the yellow phase and the green phase that those who are of high risk do not attend indoor gatherings.

In addition, the following practices would need to be in place for us to return to in-person worship. First of all, the wearing of masks and the physical distancing of at least 6 ft for all attendees who are not members of the same household. Members of the council have checked into this and have concluded that in order to maintain that 6 ft minimum distance we would only have a capacity of around 50 people. This would mean that not all of us could attend worship at the same time and in order to assure that our attendance does not exceed 50, we would need to have some kind of process in place to have people register for a place in the sanctuary.

It is also considered best practice to keep a list of attendees in the event someone tests positive after attending a worship service. All those, who attended that same service would then be notified and strongly encouraged to take the appropriate measures to either get a COVID test and/or isolate for 14 days. At that point, we would need to discontinue in-person worship for at least two weeks.

The worship service itself would be quite limited and it is recommended that it not last longer than 30 minutes. There would be no singing, no food (cookies and/or communion), no out loud unison responses, no physical contact (handshaking or personal touching), no touching of common items (offering plates, etc.), no ushers or greeters and speakers would need to use a low quiet voice. This would by no means be a church service like the ones we have had prior to the pandemic.

These above restriction and guidelines will not be lifted as we enter into the green phase. To that end, the Council decided that we will continue with on-line Zoom worship at this time, because it allows us to sing, respond, and break bread together much like we did pre-corona virus. The Council will meet again on June 30th to continue this conversation.