

Revised (Outdoor) Service Guidelines
for
Reopening Greenwoods Community Church

June 14, 2020

Introduction

The *Guidelines for Reopening Greenwoods Community Church* distributed to the congregation on June 3 elicited a range of thoughtful responses – and a clear majority view that worship services subject to those Guideline restrictions are not services that most people are interested in attending. A significant number of people, however, suggested that we should look more closely at the option of outdoor services, on the assumption that outdoor gatherings would not be subject to so many limitations. We have therefore revisited that possibility, researched the applicable governmental directives and public health guidelines, reviewed outdoor service guidelines from other churches, and prepared the following set of Outdoor Service Guidelines for an outdoor service at Greenwoods on the 14th. Our goal is to ensure that every member knows what to expect when we gather outdoors, and will be familiar with the rules and procedures we believe are needed in that context to make such gatherings both legal and responsible, minimizing the risks to all participants while maximizing to the extent currently possible the benefits of an in-person service.

Please read these new Outdoor Guidelines carefully. They do reflect differences from the original indoor Guidelines, but they also have many similarities – which is not surprising given the focus of both sets of guidelines on preventing virus transmission from one individual to another and the current understanding of how that transmission most often occurs, both indoors and out. Disappointingly, this includes a prohibition on all singing, because of the efficiency with which singing, even with a mask, is now understood to propel aerosols of minute, potentially virus-carrying particles over distances much greater than the six-foot radius we are all familiar with from standard social distancing guidelines. This is clearly less of an issue outdoors than inside because of simple dilution, but the informed consensus is that outdoor transmission is still a very real possibility where singing is involved.

As in the case of the earlier indoor Guidelines, these Outdoor Guidelines are not simply recommendations, but rules and procedures that each one of us needs to observe as we gather, not just to protect ourselves but to protect one another, and to protect everyone in the communities around us with whom we come in contact. ***If you find yourself unwilling or unable for any reason to comply with any of these Guidelines, we ask you please not to request or expect***

exceptions, but to refrain from attending until changing circumstances allow the Guidelines to be amended. In the meantime we invite you to take advantage of the recorded version of our services that will continue to be made available online for the benefit of all those who for health or other reasons consider it inadvisable to meet for gathered worship, even outdoors, at this time. If Guideline compliance turns out to be a problem, it may be necessary to suspend in-person services once again, which is not a result any of us would welcome.

I. General

- a) Selected date of June 14 for limited outdoor reopening, with appropriate social distancing and other transmission precautions in place.
- b) *Those who are sick, who have underlying health conditions, or are in high risk groups for coronavirus infection (65 or over, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, or otherwise immunocompromised, etc. – the “vulnerable”), as well as those who are simply uncomfortable in group situations at this time, are strongly advised to remain at home and enjoy our online service recordings from there.*
- c) Seating will be on the lawn to the south of the paved parking area, facing the church, and far enough back to allow room for Pastor Trip and anyone else participating in the service to stand at an appropriate distance from the nearest attendees.
- d) There will be no use of the church building except for the emergency bathroom use described below, and no use of church chairs for congregational seating. All attendees are requested to bring their own seating, to follow the directions of the ushers in arranging themselves so as to maintain the social distancing described below, and to remain seated until dismissed by Pastor Trip at the end of the service so as to avoid inadvertent social distancing violations.
- e) The same bathroom limitations described in the original indoor Guidelines will apply to an outdoor service. For the present, bathroom use will be on an emergency basis only, so please “go before you come.” (Total length of the service will be close to an hour, which should make this feasible.) Only the two main downstairs bathrooms will be open, with only one of those available at a time. We will keep the kitchen door and the Fellowship Hall partitions closed, but will have the double doors from the foyer to the serving area open for emergency access to the bathrooms, with a volunteer at the church entrance to signal if either of the bathrooms is occupied.

- f) Spaced parking (at least one full open space between vehicles) will be used in the parking lot. This is less important than if we were meeting inside, but extra space between cars will make it easier to maintain social distancing while lifting folding chairs in and out of vehicles, etc. (Please do not park on the grass, however.)
- g) Child care and Sunday School will remain suspended. All children will sit with their parents during the service.
- h) All food service before and after the service, including coffee/tea/cocoa, etc. and fellowship meals, is suspended for the time being. Attendees are welcome to bring their own water or other beverages (as well as their own cups, etc.), but are requested not to share with anyone outside their immediate family unit. Please plan to take home any trash you generate; no trash receptacles will be provided.
- i) All in-person church meetings and activities (other than the Sunday morning service itself) will remain suspended for the time being. Boards and committees may make their own decisions about meeting via Zoom or other remote means.
- j) No paper church bulletins or other handouts will be distributed or made available to attendees, including song sheets, *Daily Bread*, mission fliers and special offering envelopes. Attendees are of course welcome to bring their own bibles.
- k) Copies of these Guidelines will be distributed via email to every member of the congregation for whom we have an email address, and will be sent by regular mail to all members for whom we don't. They will also be posted on the church website, and will be physically posted both inside and outside the church.
- l) In the event of Sunday rain, either on the 14th or on subsequent Sundays, the service will be canceled and not moved indoors. A notice of any decision to cancel will be posted on the church website and sent to everyone on the all-church email list as far in advance as possible.

II. Each Person at the Outdoor Service

- a) Standard social distancing is to be maintained throughout (indoor rules apply outdoors as well):
 - Chairs should be arranged so as to ensure social distancing, with a clear layout so that if family/household units place chairs close to one another, a six-foot

minimum distance is maintained between groups, and so that adequate open space is left for people to move into position and to exit without violating social distancing . Please follow the guidance of our ushers so that this can be done in orderly fashion, without the need for readjustments as new people arrive.

- Socializing in the parking area after the service is encouraged, subject to the same social distancing and mask wearing guidelines applicable at all other times.
- b) Masks for all those over the age of five must be worn throughout. Masks are encouraged for children between the ages of two and five at the discretion of parents. *If you either cannot or prefer not to wear a mask, including for medical reasons, we ask you out of consideration for those you could infect to refrain from attending rather than requesting or expecting an exception to the mask requirements.*
- c) Masks will be provided by the church for those who arrive without them, but may be difficult and/or expensive for the church to obtain in quantity. Please remember to bring your own!
- d) Clearly marked hand sanitizer stations will be located around the gathering area. It is, however, proving difficult to obtain adequate supplies of hand sanitizer, and members are encouraged to bring their own sanitizer whenever possible.
- e) Parents are expected to keep their children with them at all times, including after the end of the service, and are responsible for ensuring compliance with social distancing and mask wearing guidelines in all interactions between their children and either adults or children of other families.

III. The Outdoor Service

- a) All participants and members of the congregation, including the Pastor and Elders, will wear masks during and after the service. Masks should not be removed for speaking during the service.
- b) Elders, and additional volunteers if needed, will serve as greeters and ushers to provide parking, seating, exiting and other guidance to those attending, and will wear gloves while performing those functions.
- c) Service length will be kept to one hour overall, with a short and child-friendly message.

- d) No singing; live music to be instrumental only. Recorded music as per current online services, or recordings of GCC soloists – Trip & Micheline, Mike & Carissa, etc.
- e) Concert of Prayer will be retained. No opening greeting between members.
- f) Shared communion will be suspended while we work on a serving protocol that adequately observes both social distancing and surface sanitation guidelines.
- g) Offering will be by plates conveniently positioned near the gathering area. Please consider taking advantage of the online giving option on the church website, or mailing your offering to the church treasurer, to avoid close contacts around the offering plates.
- h) Service is expected to be video recorded (using a single stationary camera that will not show anyone except the Pastor and other presenters) and posted online shortly after the end of the service for those choosing not to attend in person. If it turns out that such recording is not feasible under outdoor conditions, Pastor Trip plans to pre-record the message and continue his current practice of posting an entire online service, with music and prayers, etc., by 10:30 a.m. for viewing on the church website.

Special Notes

- 1) For purposes of contact tracing in the event anyone attending a Greenwoods service later tests positive for COVID-19, we need to have a record of everyone who attends and where they sit. We therefore plan to have Pastor Trip or one of the Elders take one or two photographs of the congregation from the front part way through each service, which will then be deleted from his phone after the relevant COVID-19 incubation period has passed. Visitors whose contact information is unknown to us will be asked to provide it by filling out one of our visitor cards and dropping it in the offering plate as they leave.
- 2) ***We have been advised that it is helpful from the point of view of potential church liability to be sure that all who choose to attend our reopened services are made aware that despite our best efforts, there are still risks involved. These Guidelines represent what well informed public and church authorities consider to be appropriate protective measures for an outdoor service. We cannot, however, completely eliminate the risk of exposure to coronavirus infection at any in-person worship service. By choosing to participate, you are assuming whatever risk such participation entails of exposure to infectious and communicable diseases.***