

Reentering Our Facilities Plan

Current as of June 12, 2020

Dear Friends,

Bethel's congregation is built on strong relationships that are centered on the grace and love of Jesus Christ. Knowing the importance of our relationships, Bethel's leadership has drafted a tentative plan to reenter our buildings and to prepare for when we can meet, talk, and worship together again face-to-face. This plan focuses on the protection and safety of God's people.

We've consulted a variety of sources to develop this reentrance plan, including guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Health, the CDC, our synod office, and best practices from other large congregations.

The reentry plan has four stages. Except for Stage 1, we have not yet assigned dates for moving to the next stage. We recognize that going through these stages may be a "back and forth" process. So, until we reach the final stage of this plan, members of our community are encouraged to continue personal preparedness by hand washing, avoiding touching our faces, and wearing masks when visiting Bethel facilities.

Our Current Status

Our Sunday 8 am Downtown service is being live streamed on Facebook and is broadcasted on WEVR radio. We also live stream the 9:30 am service on Facebook, YouTube and on our website at bethelhudson.org. Both services are recorded and are available for later viewing.

We will continue live streaming of services for the foreseeable future. The public is currently not able to physically attend these services.

The main church office phones are covered from 9 am to noon each weekday. Bethel staff members generally work from home but visit the buildings as needed. Masks are worn within our buildings when interacting with others. The custodial staff has been continually cleaning and disinfecting our facilities. Consistent with the Hudson School District, Bethel Highlands Preschool is closed. Neither campus is available for meetings and kitchen facilities are not being used. The Thursday HOME meal ministry offers vouchers for free meals served by local fast food providers.

Stage 1 – Changes effective Monday, June 15

Bethel's main Downtown church office will be staffed and physically open from 9 am to 2 pm Monday through Friday. However, most Bethel staff will be in the building only as needed. Bethel meeting rooms will be made available only to addiction recovery ministries where small group meetings are considered essential. These meetings will be limited in size and will involve social distancing and the wearing of masks. Care will be taken to sanitize meeting areas after each session.

In-person worship will not yet begin, but we will hold a "drive-in" live stream viewing service on Father's Day (June 21st) at the Highlands campus at 9:30. In addition, check Bethel's website at bethelhudson.org for other scheduled outdoor events such as Blessing of the Wheels and Outdoor Movie Nights.

Stage 2 – Date to be determined

Face-to-face worship will resume at both campuses using social distancing practices and the use of masks. A phone and internet sign-up process will be used to limit the number of worship attendees at each service. Depending on demand, we may add back services and/or open additional rooms such as the Children’s Theater, Youth Room, or the Fellowship Hall for small group live stream viewing. Those who are immune-compromised or are otherwise at risk should not physically attend these services.

Communion will not yet be available at these services. Hymnals and Bibles will be removed from the sanctuary as all worship content will be displayed on the large screens. We will forego the sharing of peace. Stationary offering plates will be placed near each sanctuary entrance. Children are welcome to worship with their families, but we ask that they remain with their parents during the Children’s Message. Nursery care will not yet be available. Congregational singing would depend on recommendations made by the Department of Health.

Face-to-face Bible studies will resume. Weddings and funerals can resume but will be limited in size, consistent with social distancing practices in place at that time. **Live streaming of services will continue as will ongoing cleaning and disinfecting practices.**

Stage 3 – Date to be determined

The number of attendees at worship and events will be expanded in a manner consistent with then current guidance. We will continue to follow cautious worship practices as described in Stage 2, but Communion (wafer only) will be restored. Masks are still recommended but not required. Worship service times will be restored. Youth and family education, such as Bethel Highlands Preschool, Sunday School, Confirmation, youth events, etc. will resume using an approach consistent with that used by the Hudson School District. Thursday evening HOME meals may be served face-to-face.

The Downtown main church office will resume normal office hours of 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. **Live streaming of services will continue as will ongoing cleaning and disinfecting practices.**

Stage 4 - Date to be determined

Bethel’s worship services and educational programming will no longer be limited in size. All worship service elements including communion with wine will be restored. Masks will become a thing of the past and social distancing restrictions will be eased. Nursery childcare will be available during worship.

We are excited and anxious to see everyone again! But there remains uncertainty as we move forward. Yet we remain firm in our belief that “nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Not life, nor death, nor angels, nor rulers...” nor Covid-19, nor quarantine... “nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

We do not anticipate simply moving back to “what it was,” but rather to a new and stronger future! Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your commitment to the wellbeing of others in our community, and thank you for being the church, wherever you are.

In God’s great love,
Bethel’s Reentrance Committee