

April 2020: Letter to Governor Mike DeWine

Governor Mike DeWine
Ohio State House
Columbus, Ohio

Dear Governor DeWine:

You have been held up in prayer and protection during this Coronavirus epidemic. Thank you for your leadership and guidance over the past two months. We realize the pressures are intense that you are under.

The Bible states in the book of Proverbs, "In the multitude of counselors there is wisdom. It also states in James that "if you lack wisdom, ask God and He will give it to you in abundance and He will keep giving it. I pray that for you.

I am writing this letter on behalf of our local church, BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH in Ashland County and the member churches of the Ashland County Ministerial Association, 50+ churches strong. We are multiple denominations and various size churches.

For the past 6 weeks we have abided by the guidance and directives of the state and local health department guidelines. In Ashland County we have had 5 declared cases, 3 of which are back into the public square of life. **IT IS TIME TO WORSHIP AGAIN.** Governor and Health Director Amy Acton, we are letting you know of our intention to worship together again in the month of May.

I have called our local health department to ask for some "directives" for the churches who are planning to assemble together again. We are asking for protocols that are reasonable and preventative. We are willing to make investments into "best practices" conduct, but we are also declaring our good intentions.

The numbers of declared cases in the state of Ohio are far below the previously announced declarations. There will always be a threat to this virus and many others like it. We will never be in a 'sanitized' condition, so we need to know what is best for our churches to do in order to worship in a protected and safe environment.

In a final request, it is on behalf of the many business leaders our churches are associated with that I request in addition that you permit our businesses to function again with the same safe guards we are implementing in our churches. The citizens of Ohio are capable and responsible in their personal hygiene to protect themselves.

Thank you for what has been done. We appreciate what has been done to this point, but we are now requesting our freedom back and our liberties restored.

Praying for you,
Pastor John A. Bouquet
Bethel Baptist Church
Ashland County

Letter to Church Congregation

God is OUR Healer, Our Helper, Our Hope

Jeremiah 33:6 (ESV)

“6 Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.”

Thursday, April 16, 2020

Opening the Church for Worship

Dear Church Family and Friends of Bethel:

It is with excitement that I announce to you the opening of Bethel for public worship services again, **starting Sunday, May 3, 2020**. The Board of Deacons and our pastors gave unanimous approval to this proposal at our Zoom live streaming board meeting tonight, April 16, 2020 from 7:00 – 8:15 PM.

Let me address some concerns before I proceed with specifics. One, there is still a serious concern for wise and prudent health distancing around people. Coronavirus is serious and we are not negating that at all. Two, we are taking a gradual step by step process to returning to public worship life. Three, no one is under any obligation or judgment if you do not feel this is the right time for you. We respect you and your concerns.

The plan is to get ready for our opening with a deep cleaning and sanitization of the building. That is being done as we speak. Tiffany has been shampooing all the carpets. The building and its furniture will be sanitized to the best of our ability. Truly it is spotless and looks great.

We are preparing with the proper equipment and safe health measures. We are purchasing thermometers, masks are being provided, gloves and plenty of hand sanitizer. We will practice physical distancing except for family units. Our security team will manage the distancing measures. If you have

any kind of an abnormal temperature, it will be suggested for you to refrain from coming or be in isolation in a separate room where the service will be streamed into that room.

We realize this process is ongoing and progressive. We have to grow back together as a body as people feel comfortable with reduced anxiety. We have come to realize we need each other more than we ever realized or appreciated. Togetherness is essential to our faith. We are a community and in community there is health and well-being. We were not meant to isolate.

Your suggestions are welcome along the way. If you are not comfortable with any actions, your voice is important, we want to hear. We cannot implement everyone's suggestions. What is good for you at your home, may not work here at the church. Please understand, we are striving to do the best for our entire church community.

Remember, attendance at Bethel has always been and will always remain voluntary. No one has to come; we would love for you to come and worship with us.

Please read over the protocols we will be following as we return to worship. If you have questions, suggestions, or Godly advice, please forward them to the pastors or Deacon's. I strongly suggest you refrain from any word on social media. We are intentionally doing a 'soft opening' to evaluate as we go forward.

Thank you to the whole church family for your watch care for each other. You cared for each other in a compassionate manner. I am proud to pastor this great congregation. I love you and miss you deeply.

See you soon!

Praying for a moving of God's Spirit over OUR Land and the Nations,

PJ

Protocol for Returning to Worship May 2020

It's Time to WORSHIP AGAIN

The Plan to Return to Worship as a body of Believers at the Church

START DATE:

Sunday, May 3rd, 2020 @ 10:45 am

FORMAT OF WORSHIP:

We will only be meeting in the auditorium for that day and several weeks after that. We are easing back into congregational worship life slowly.

(No Sunday Schools classes, No nursery or Toddler's or Jr. Church)

Streaming Online Services will continue (indefinitely)

PREPARATIONS FOR WORSHIP: [The protocol for returning to worship as a church.]

1. Sanitize your hands before you attend.
2. Your temperature will be taken inside the main entrance upon your arrival. If you have any kind of abnormal temperature reading, you will be asked to isolate in another room with a monitor or you may return to your home.
3. You will be provided a mask to wear at your discretion, it is not required to be worn.
4. You may sit with your immediate family members only. All guests not related must sit or stand 6ft from one another.
5. You will have the option of gloves.
6. We discourage all physical contact with hugging, handshakes, etc.

Disclaimers:

1. COMMUNION, should be handsfree or drive-in; it is discouraged to conduct it in the building.
2. PEW BIBLES AND HYMN BOOKS, should be sanitized after use. It is preferred for parishioners to bring their own Bibles.

Our worship service will be the same length as the online services we have been broadcasting the past few weeks. We are sensitive to time because we have no children's ministry services available. Families are sitting together at home anyway.

This protocol is proposed on Thursday, April 16, 2020

1st:

2nd:

Vote:

Chairman, Elder/Deacon

Vice Chair, Elder/Deacon

Pastor

4/16/2020 Per discussion and review with Jill Hartson of the Ashland County Health
Department
Bethel Baptist Church, Savannah, Ohio 44874