



May 27, 2020

Dear Blainsport Church family,

During the last two months, I began seeing the events outlined in Acts 8 in a new light. Following the death of Stephen, a great persecution broke out against the Christians. This persecution led to the “scattering” of the church in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, the believers understood persecution as more than an inconvenience but as painful suffering. Despite the persecution (more likely because of it), the believers were scattered (Acts 8:1), and the Word of God spread. “But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went” (Acts 8:4, NLT). I hope we spread the Good News during COVID-19 rather than spreading fear or worse anger about the situation. God is sovereign, so we know that He had a purpose for our feelings of loss and separation. His purpose throughout history during these types of events was for the church to proclaim the Gospel. I look forward to hearing the stories of how His “scattered” church spread “the Good News about Jesus” during these past weeks.

Last week, the Leadership Team and the Leadership Council carefully discerned how and when we resume on-site services at Blainsport. I shared with you some of the considerations that we must keep in mind when we decide. After prayer and careful consideration, we decided to resume modified worship gatherings in the church building on June 7.

Our morning gathering will look similar to what we have grown accustomed to over the years. However, we must make a few modifications in order to honor social distancing guidelines and maximum capacity seating.

Here is our order of service for June 7. We will make adjustments for subsequent services with the lifting of CDC limitations or if unexpected challenges surface.

- Singing Together at 10:00 AM
- Call to Worship at 10:15 AM
- Announcements
- Children’s Story (Children remain with their family)
- Morning Message
- Sharing Time
- Pastoral Prayer and Benediction
- Piano Postlude
- Dismiss row by row (similar to a wedding)
- Fellowship and Greeting Outside

Now, let me explain the reason for the order and the details about seating.

First, we begin by singing from 10 AM till 10:15 AM. We understand that studies show COVID-19 has a greater chance to spread when singing because more “thrust” from the lungs occurs during singing (if you are doing it right). By allowing 15 minutes at the beginning of the service, those wanting to participate can and those with concerns can wait until 10:15 to enter the sanctuary. This is a way to respect and honor as many people as possible.

Second, sharing time will be at the end of the service so that we can end the live-streaming first. We do not want to broadcast personal prayer requests on the internet. Those who call in by phone should still hear this portion since it is only available to our members and regular attendees. Also, persons choosing to share should speak into the microphone while the usher holds it. That way, fewer people need to handle the microphone, potentially passing germs.

Third, the reason for dismissing bench by bench is to make sure we do not have overcrowding in our hallway, lobby, and entrance. We must aim to maintain 50% of each room's capacity. The sanctuary can fit 100-140 people, but the lobby is substantially less. We hope that everyone will fellowship and greet each other outside. By doing this, we also provide a way for those feeling more at risk of the virus to leave easily.

Now, for seating. We strongly encourage you to wear a face mask when you enter the building. When seated, feel free to take off the mask until you leave. I am neither a politician nor a medical doctor. Therefore, I cannot speak to the effectiveness of a mask. All I know is that Scripture tells us to "Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other" (Romans 12:10, NLT). If only one person feels that it is important to wear a mask while entering and exiting the building, I am willing for their sake to wear the mask. Come at least ten minutes early so that you can find a seat. Benches will be marked, indicating an open aisle seat. Please sit together as a family or household to maximize space. Each bench will have one family or household on it; we will stagger from the center aisle to the window aisle. If you prefer maintaining the maximum social distancing, please sit on the worship team side of the sanctuary. If you feel at ease with a little closer spacing (if the need arises), we might need to have two households per bench. We aim to maintain less than 130 people in the sanctuary. Still, making it all work might prove challenging the first weeks back together.

For the time being, we will not have Nursery staff, Sunday School, or Reign Forest. Parents may change diapers in the nursery and wipe the area with sanitary wipes following use. We encourage parents to review the expectations with their families. Please supervise your children for the sake of others. However, on-site participants assume the risk that young children may encroach social distancing guidelines. We can try to lessen the risk; we cannot eliminate it.

When considering if you should attend a worship gathering in the church building, please be sure to ask the following questions on behalf of your entire household.

- Am I showing any flu-like symptoms?
- Have I had a fever of 100.4 or higher in the past 14 days?
- Have I had prolonged exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
- Is there any medical reason why I believe I shouldn't be around others?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, we strongly encourage you not to attend, but to consider our online and call-in options. Also, it is completely understandable if you choose to wait a little longer before attending a service in person. Take your time and make the best decision for you. We support you in whatever you choose at this time.

In Christ's love,

