

NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH REOPENING TASK TEAM

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RETURNING TO WORSHIP IN OUR BUILDING



This note recaps the Team’s discussion on June 24, 2020.

In general, the Team feels we should take a conservative approach to returning to in-person worship. There is a sense that we will *not be ready to do so before September*, if then, particularly with the recent uptick we are seeing in virus infections in Michigan and throughout the country.

Danny Hawkins shared some articles on the risks of different activities. In the opinion of epidemiologists, attending church in person is one of the highest-risk activities.

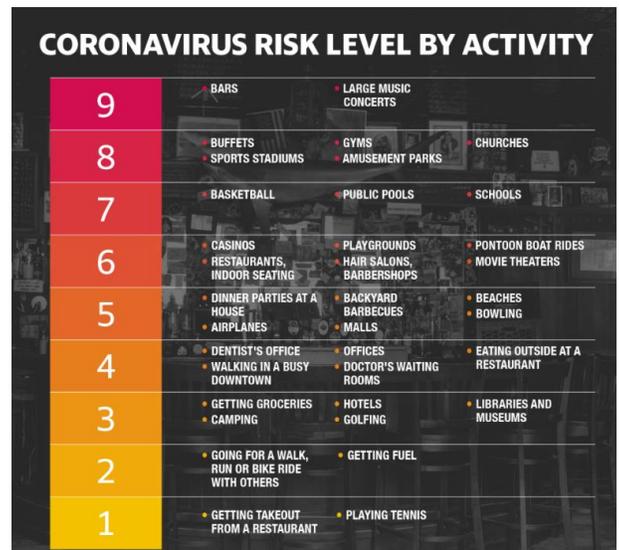
Several members suggested that we attempt to learn from the experience of other churches that open their buildings before we do, particularly churches in our area.

Pat Butler and Karen Moore shared experiences. Pat noted that many people in public are not adhering to the 6’ distancing guideline. Karen remarked that she saw another church service letting out; the attendees were shaking hands and hugging in their parking lot, many without masks. This highlights the risk of people returning to old habits, even with warnings and communication.

Members noted that, due to the changing nature of the disease situation, it is difficult (and frustrating) to attempt to plan. We need to remain patient and flexible.

The Team discussed what we would need to see before we resumed in-building worship. The mentioned items included:

- The State of Michigan in Stage 5 of recovery.
- Consistently low and declining number of new cases (at least two weeks).
- Prior, successful experience of movie theaters and other large venues reopening.



- ‘Dry run’ with the ushers to verify the new procedures and make sure the ushers are comfortable with them.
- Our initial in-building worship will not have the choir or soloists; recorded songsters, Pat playing the organ, and possibly other, non-wind instruments.

Liane Jensen shared her concern that, while we need to do everything we can to keep people safe, coming to church is a habit. If people fall out of that habit it may impact our future. Rev. Biedron agreed, noting that we need to be thinking about becoming more of an on-line church, and about how we keep our friends and Members engaged.

To that end, the Team shared some suggestions:

- Experiment with a Zoom meeting for all Church members, allowing interaction.
- Experiment with small group gatherings (properly social distanced) – for example, friends or neighbors getting together to watch one of Mimi’s messages.
- Take steps to involve friends and Members who are not on Facebook.

Kevin asked the Team to think further on this last topic. Our next meeting will be focused on what it means for us to be an on-line church, and how we might improve on what we are doing.

MI SAFE START PLAN

