

The Church Councils of King's Valley, South Beef River, and Upper Pigeon Creek met today, Sunday, May 17, 2020 to discuss the possibility of returning to worship. We all studied the Wisconsin Council of Churches' summary of the issues and procedures in restarting worship in line with government recommendations, and then went through the options that are available to keep worship as safe as possible for attendees. That summary is included in this newsletter for anyone to read.

After extensive discussions, all three Councils decided to propose dates to begin worship in a safe manner.

King's Valley and Upper Pigeon Creek, partly because of the smaller worshipping congregations, both are aiming for May 31.

South Beef River, in the interest of caution and to prepare for larger service attendance, chose a start date of June 7.

If there is a spike in infections locally, new regulations, or other unforeseen circumstances, those date may change or be rolled back.

The first worship will intentionally celebrate Easter and offer Communion. The following Sunday's worship will follow with a recognition of Pentecost.

At these first services, there will not be hymn singing, because of the viral load that can be added to the air through that activity, as well as no use of wind instruments for the same reason. Readers will have dedicated lecterns and microphones so as not to have to share equipment during worship activities. We are asking for soloists, small groups, or instrumentalists who may want to offer music during worship, performing from an appropriately distanced area with dedicated mics and instruments.

Parishioners are asked to practice social distancing and wearing of face masks during service. Pews will be marked off for proper spacing of worshippers, although couples and families may sit together. We recommend that no direct contact with others take place, such as in sharing the Peace or gathering in the Narthex. Offering plates will be kept near the exits, not passed around. Each church will provide extra masks and hand sanitizer near the entrances. Please try not to use 'hi-touch' areas like doorknobs and handrails. All doors will be propped open and multiple entrances and exits will be in use. The balconies will be closed for the immediate future so that parishioners on the main floor won't have to worry about sneezing or coughing from overhead. Depending on the situations, bathrooms may or may not be used with open doors if line of sight and stalls allow it; otherwise, users are asked to wash their hands after use and employ a paper towel or tissue to touch the doorknobs, then dispose of the paper product. Please limit the number of people in a bathroom and honor other's space. Bulletins will be spread out so that no one needs to worry about cross-contamination. We will employ a special practice for Communion. When you enter the sanctuary or meeting room, small paper plates with a wafer and communion cup, covered by a napkin, will be on a table where communicants can pick them up as they enter church. They can be kept alongside the parishioner on the pew until it is time to take part in the Lord's Supper. Communion preparers will use masks, gloves and implements in preparing the servings to keep them uncontaminated. Above all else, show your love and compassion for others, especially those at high risk, and stay home if you are sick or have concerns. The on-line worship resources will continue to be offered as we join in public worship.

Peace, Pastor Dave