

Tentative worship service plan for early December: continued use of video services

- Premiering online at 10:45 AM each Sunday on Facebook and YouTube
- Two public, in-person screenings of the service at the church at 9 AM and 10:45 AM
- Mailed CDs and DVDs will continue to be available for those who choose to stay home, but who have no online access

For these first few weeks of December, the deacons have decided to try out a middle ground—not yet returning to full, in-person services yet, but also not limiting ourselves to online services only. Our pre-recorded video services will continue to be our main service offering, posted on Facebook and YouTube as usual, but we'll also be opening the church up on Sunday mornings for anyone who would like to come and participate in a screening of the video service together, rather than simply watching in their own homes. So at 9 AM and 10:45 AM, the weekly service video will be screened at the church, and up to fifty attenders can be present to watch and take part if they so desire. All attenders will be asked to wear masks for the entirety of the service and to practice a softer form of singing than usual, in addition to other distancing and hygiene measures. As before, the early service will be the safest in-person option in terms of viral transmission. Anyone with any symptoms, or anyone who has possibly been in contact with someone with Covid, is asked to stay home, and anyone with major risk factors is also strongly encouraged to stay home.

Why not just go back to regular in-person services again?

- There's still a sustained level of community transmission of the virus in our area, and large-group gatherings like church services are particularly vulnerable. With the updated restrictions from the state, a normal church service would require all worship leaders and speakers to be masked throughout the service. (And because we've already been in the public spotlight once for an outbreak, we don't really feel comfortable going against the guidelines at this point, because that could seriously damage our witness to our community). Pre-recorded video services allow Pastor Matt and some of our worship leaders to continue contributing without having to sing or preach through masks.
- We're assuming that because of the local outbreak, in-person participation at our services will be lower than before. More people are choosing to connect with the church via our online services, and we can offer a higher quality of online video by continuing our pre-recorded premieres than we could by streaming live in-person services from the church. Since the majority of our congregation will likely be watching online rather than in person, we're opting to do our best to serve that larger group.

With the possibility of another outbreak, why offer any in-person option at all?

- With mask use 100% of the time and the likelihood of lower numbers in attendance, in addition to other safety and hygiene rules we'll observe, it should be somewhat safer than before. (Of course, there will still be some risk, as there always is in any public setting.)
- Some members of the church feel a deep need for the togetherness of fellowship, especially during the Christmas season. Fellowship is one of the essentials of the Christian life, and even though watching a video service together is not ideal, it still offers something to help meet that need.
- There is a possibility, if the state outbreak worsens, that shutdown orders may be coming somewhere down the line, so it feels like we need to make use of the chance we have right now to meet together before it might be taken away again for awhile.