



Greenbelt Community Church, United Church of Christ

Recommendations for Regathering

We are the Church. We recognize that while we have a beautiful facility in which to worship and gather for fellowship that the purpose and function of the church, praising God, keeping others and ourselves in prayer and caring for our neighbors is not confined to a building but is evident the ministry of its people.

Currently, we continue to gather for worship using the different pieces of technology that are available to us. We continue to find ways to meet the needs of our community, and we continue to pray boldly for God's presence and guidance during this time. We long for the time when we can gather at 1 Hillside Road. In order to do that we offer the following recommendations and guidelines to help us do so when it is safe for us to gather together again.

These are Recommendations

We first and foremost recognize that **the health and safety of the people of Greenbelt Community Church, United Church of Christ is our priority** and any decision that we make will be made with the recommendation of certified health sources such as the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization and not at the whims of uninformed sources or popular opinion. This will be a decision that is made with the Moderator and the Church Council with input from the Regathering Team.

We recognize that the timing of regathering may not suit everyone. There will be some who feel confident in returning with practical distancing, wearing masks, and proper disinfecting protocols in place. Others may not feel comfortable to return until such time as a vaccine is in place. **Each person must make the decision that works for them and the ministry team will continue to ensure that being in worship is available through Zoom or other media platforms so that all who want to join in worship can.**

Building Use

Access

We recommend that access into the buildings during the week continue to be minimized and should mainly be the Pastor and the Administrative Assistant. It is understood that other people may need to enter from time to time, and it is asked that they:

1. Call the office to alert them of their arrival
2. Wear a mask
3. Enter only through the door at the front of the building by the church office (even if you have a key to the building, please enter through this entrance)

Signage will be posted regarding the restrictions and precautions we are taking.

Fellowship Center

Will remain closed until January 2021. The Trustees will need to be in conversation with the Montessori School and other users.

Social Hall

- All tables and chairs will be taken down and put away until January 2021
- No rentals will be allowed until January 2021
- No gatherings in the social hall of any number will take place until January 2021

Kitchen

The Kitchen will not be used until January 2021. Prior to reinstating fellowship time after church, a strict protocol for serving food and beverage and cleaning up needs to be established and adhered to.

Bathroom Use

Protocols will need to be established regarding use of bathroom. Water fountain should not be used.

Sanctuary

The Sanctuary will only be opened on Sundays, or if needed for a funeral or memorial service for members. Signage will be displayed.

- Everyone entering the Sanctuary must wear a mask. Masks will be available for those who need them.
- All Greeters must be masked and will maintain safe distance.
- Entry will be only through the front doors.
- The back door into the building (directly off parking lot) will not be in use.
- Hand sanitizer will be accessible/readily available.

The front sidewalk leading into the building will be marked off at 6-foot increments and we ask that people observe the distance as they enter the building. Greeters will be available to make certain that anyone with mobility issues do not need to stand in line but can be moved into the building ahead of those who are able-bodied.

Pews will be filled front to back, first down the center aisle and then down the side aisle, with Ushers guiding people to seats. Rows will be released at the end of service, so that practical distancing can be maintained.

Pew cushions have been removed from half of the pews, and each pew has been divided into 6-foot increments as noted by blue tape. There will no seating in the balcony, but people can sit in the choir loft.

All Bibles, hymnals, pencils, and papers have been removed from the pews.

Following the worship service, all seated pews will need to be wiped down with disinfectant wipes.

The best – and safest -- method for bulletin distribution will be determined by Board of Worship. Electronic distribution will also be explored.

Usher team will keep log of those attending worship service. In the event that someone in attendance reports a positive test for COVID-19, a protocol must be applied to possibly notify health department, but definitely share information with others in the church and close the church until the building can be properly cleaned.

Worship

ALL ANNOUNCEMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING to the Office by Wednesday of every week. We will not invite people to come up front, nor should the pastor be moving among the congregation with a microphone. Announcements can be emailed to the office to be put in the bulletin. They will be repeated in the Monday Newsletter via email, or they can be given in writing to the Pastor via email PRIOR to Sunday morning

We do not expect to have paper bulletins handled by ushers and attendees. The best – and safest -- method for **bulletin distribution** will be determined by Board of Worship. Electronic distribution is being explored.

Passing of the Peace will be offered verbally but people must remain in their pew to offer a verbal welcome to others.

There will be **no congregational or choir singing** until January 2021, but we encourage people to continue to share your musical gifts through special music.

Offering will not be taken by ushers passing plates. A “gift” table can be set up in the Narthex so gifts can be left when people enter or exit. Pledges may also be mailed to the office. Those wishing to pay online, may use the CashApp, the “Donate Now” button on Facebook, or by setting Greenbelt Community Church up through your bank’s online bill pay.

The Pastor will be able to greet you at the end of worship verbally and with practical distancing.

Communion can still take place, but without the passing of the Elements. The Board of Worship is currently exploring non-contact options for communion.

Meetings and Programs

It is our recommendation that all in-person meetings and functions be cancelled or held via Zoom until January 2021. Some Board meetings may be able to resume if the social hall is used with only chairs and appropriate distancing, but that needs to be agreed upon by each board. No tables should be used, as everything must be disinfected.

It is our recommendation that all rentals, with the exception of the Beltsville Seventh Day Adventist Church be suspended until January of 2021, and that the Trustees work with SDA to ensure they are following our guidelines for no Sunday School and no meetings outside of Worship on Sunday and Bible Study on Tuesday evenings.

Sunday School is suspended until January 2021, and the Board of Christian Education is encouraged to find other methods to provide alternative learning for both youth and adults.

We are living in an extraordinary time, one that takes patience and perseverance and guidance from the Holy Spirit who helps us to do all things in the light and love of God. As we started writing this document at the end of May 2020, we watched as cities and states around us begin to reopen. We understand the need to proceed with

caution and at the same time recognize that there will be a time for us to come together again. The recommendations that are offered are just that, recommendations. They are not set in stone but presented with the idea of giving us all a place to work from. We recognize that things change rapidly, and any recommendation or guideline needs to be flexible. We need to be able and willing to change with the changing times.

In the Book of Esther, Esther is a young Hebrew woman who has become a favorite wife of the king, but she is advised by her uncle to keep her true heritage hidden. When the king is advised to massacre the Hebrews in his kingdom, Esther is now urged by her uncle to reveal herself for “such a time as this” to save her people.

Now more than ever, we as the congregation of Greenbelt Community Church, United Church of Christ, need to take on our true identity as ministers of God, as disciples of Jesus, doing the hard work that needs to be done in “such a time as this.” In that calling we will truly **Love God and Love our Neighbors**.

*Prepared and Presented by the “Regathering Team” of the
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