

May 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

To accommodate and faithfully serve God's people at BLC while complying with the health and safety guidelines of our government during these days, **our services will resume at the regular times on May 31st, Pentecost Sunday.** I prefer to call this a "re-igniting" rather than a re-opening. Why? Because the church never closed (the universal church – small c) and neither did Bethlehem (upper case C). Besides, it is Pentecost so why not use a reference to fire and flame like **re-ignite**.

I have listed some guidelines for us to follow until further notice:

1. The services will last 45 minutes in order to allow for disinfecting between services.
2. Fifty people, spaced six feet apart and seated every other row, will be allowed into the sanctuary. Of course, couples and family groups may sit together if they wish. Rope or tape will be used to insure every-other pew for seating.
3. In case of overflow (more than 50 people), Pastor Nate will be in the Disciples Hall prepared to lead an identical service (without musicians) on Pentecost Sunday. Going forward, however, whoever is not preaching in the sanctuary will be prepared for a sermon to be delivered in Disciples Hall. Normally, pastors will alternate Sundays.
4. Those who feel more comfortable using masks and/or gloves should be encouraged to do so.
5. The pastor will announce that the order of service is printed in the bulletin and projected on the screens. Hymnals and pew Bibles should not be used.
6. There will be no children's message until further notice.
7. There will be no Sunday School for children or adults until further notice.
8. Please bring your offerings. However, offering plates will not be passed. On the way in or out of the sanctuary, you may place your offering into the offering plate provided on a table in the rear of the sanctuary. At this critical time I am asking you to be generous and sacrificial, if you are able, so that our ministry can continue with the proclamation of the Gospel and the care of souls. If you are unable to come to public worship at this time, contributions can either be mailed to the church or can be made online via the **blcjaxbeach.org** website under the **Members Tab** and then click on "**Electronic Giving**."
9. Holy Communion will be given by the pastors only, unless one pastor is in Disciples Hall and an elder is required to assist. The servers (pastors and elders) will sanitize their hands prior to serving.
10. There will be only one communion line and those communing should remain six feet apart (unless they are a couple or family).
11. The wafer will be placed in the communicant's hand.
12. The individual cups will be placed on the chancel rail as we have been doing for private communion services during the past two months. The Common Cup (chalice) will not be used until further notice.
13. Please practice social distancing as best you are able. Do not offer/give handshakes or hugs. This goes against my nature. However, even though we may feel safe we don't want to offend or humiliate others who may feel differently or who may have underlying conditions about which we know nothing. This is not a time to test others. Besides, there are those who could be carriers of Covid-19 and be completely unaware. So could you. So let's err on the side of caution for just a little while longer.
14. These services are designed intentionally to be shorter. Consequently, some ordinary/common elements of the liturgy will not be used. These are extreme situations, and we will do the best that we are able to do, being supportive and encouraging of one another along the way. We all realize that this is only temporary and that we are continuing to try to make the best of this challenging situation. We are all praying to the Lord that He would bring an end to this dilemma as soon as possible while granting us strength to carry on faithfully and at peace in His shepherding care.
15. If you have underlying health conditions or are the primary care-giver of someone with underlying health conditions that would make it unwise for you to attend, please stay home and **watch the live-stream service on the BLC Facebook page at 11 a.m.** (also recorded for later viewing) **or on YouTube** beginning the next day accessed through the blcjaxbeach.org website.

16. Please continue praying to the Lord for an end to this disease while asking His strength and blessing for all those first responders and health care workers who are attending to folks in this trying situation. Pray for all the millions of people who through no fault of their own have lost their jobs and are struggling to care for their families. Pray also for our country and her leaders, that they may make wise and careful decisions that will keep us all safe, strong, and well.

Please know that this document has been reviewed and affirmed by Pastor Nate and the Board of Elders.

The Peace of the Lord be with you all,

Pastor Dana Allen Brones.

Pastor Nathan McCarty

The Board of Elders