

Saint Andrews United Methodist Church
Reopening Task Force Meeting
Sunday, March 21, 12:30 pm

In Attendance:

Merlin Young, D.D.S., Acting Task Force Chair & Trustees Chair
Vann Spivey, Pastor
Jeff Cope, Acting Administrative Board Chair
Ken Hendrickson Acting Lay Leader
Claude Jenkins, Finance Chair
Doug Harwood, Witness Ministry Coord., AV Coord., Acting Worship Coord.
Iris Senzig, Safety Coordinator
Evelyn Tay, Registered Nurse (Director of Nursing at Generations Family Practice)
Stacey Thomas, Director of Children's Ministry
Ellen Beasley, Director of Youth Ministry
Brittany Fuentes, Choir Director
Teresa Hunt, Administrative Assistant
Jim Hunt, AV Team Member
Dennis Will, AV Team Member
Ben Garner, AV Team Member
Miles Hunt, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Ministerial Candidate

Merlin called the meeting to order. Vann offered an opening prayer.

Opening Remarks: Merlin Young

Because the nature of the pandemic is constantly changing, the reopening process is a moving target. The infection rate is still too high and there are many unknowns about the virus and the vaccines, so it's too early to let down our guard.

Concerns About the Guidelines for Small Groups: Merlin Young

A complaint has been made that the guidelines don't allow "fully vaccinated people" to meet onsite without restrictions. Here are the CDC's most recent recommendations for vaccinated people in non-healthcare settings:

Fully vaccinated people can:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Visit with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at minimal risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Refrain from quarantine and testing following a known exposure if asymptomatic

For now, fully vaccinated people should continue to:

- Take precautions in public like wearing a well-fitted mask and physical distancing

- Wear masks, practice physical distancing, and adhere to other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease or who have an unvaccinated household member who is at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease
- Wear masks, maintain physical distance, and practice other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple households
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations

Merlin said data is still being gathered about whether vaccinated people can be asymptomatic carriers of the virus, so it is important to continue to require masks and social distancing even for fully vaccinated persons.

Vann reminded the group that in our most recent meeting, we agreed that segregating our congregation into vaccinated and non-vaccinated groups was unfair to those who, through no fault of their own, have not been able to receive their vaccinations. We want small groups—and later, worship gatherings—to be able to host a mixed group of vaccinated and non-vaccinated persons. If small groups of fully vaccinated persons want to meet offsite, that’s their business, but onsite, masks and social distancing should still be required.

Reopening for In-Person, Indoor Worship

Jeff Cope suggested we start our discussion of reopening for indoor worship by deciding the best method to get persons in and out of the building. He recommended that, at least to start, the members of the Reopening Task Force should be front and center as ushers and guides.

Suggestions:

Brittany: Enter through the glass atrium doors in the Gathering Space

Merlin: Enter through the portico doors because the hallway is narrow and traffic flow can be better controlled

Vann: If we use the portico doors for entry, the same doors should be used for exit. Using the atrium doors for exit in a larger space might encourage persons to linger and mingle, which we don’t want.

Evelyn: Check each person’s temperature at the door before they enter the building.

Ken: Print an alphabetized church roll or some other document and check people’s names off as they enter. This could be done at a table just inside the doors, or further up the hallway.

Doug: Consider a reservation system like the ones other churches use, because our legal capacity right now is 114 people.

Evelyn: Each member could be issued a barcode version of their name and they could be scanned to speed up registration.

Merlin: Keep the registration process simple for now, use the checklist.

Miles: Print a roster only of those who have preregistered, like a manifest or boarding list.

Evelyn: Agreed that we should stay simple until we get a feel for how many people to expect.

Evelyn: If somebody needs to leave before everybody else is inside, they should be escorted out the kitchen-side doors. Then they would re-enter through the portico.

Bathrooms:

Bathrooms will be open. They will not be checked or recleaned during the service. Automatic soap dispensers and paper towel dispensers have been installed. Sanitizing wipes will be available for bathroom users.

Worship Details

Music: Vann said that until we can all be unmasked, there will be no congregational singing. For now, we'll continue to use recordings of our own musicians. The videos that are being broadcasted online will be projected onto a screen inside. At some point, we may re-introduce live instrumental music or solo singing.

Holy Communion: Will be offered in pre-packaged form. The elements will be placed on seats before the service in order to maintain social distancing.

Baptism: There are two options. (1) A family can request an offsite, family-only baptism which will be recorded and played during the Sunday service. The pastor will of course be masked and gloved for this. (2) The family can choose a live baptism on Sunday morning, provided masks are worn and social distancing can be maintained.

Offering: A basket/box will be placed on a stand or stool near the Great Room doors.

Seating: Jeff says Sarah recommends arranging chairs in twos, socially distanced. Family groups can pull chairs together. Doug asked who was going to be responsible for set-up and take-down, since we'll soon resume Open Gym night, and the chairs will have to be removed. Jeff said he'd start getting volunteers and Vann recommended enlisting some of the people who have continued to worship in-person outside.

Capacity Etc.: Thirty percent of our fire department rated capacity is 114 people, but we should not set that as the reservation number. Brittany recommended setting the number lower so that we have room for unexpected visitors. We don't want to turn anybody away unless we're absolutely full. The group agreed to start with 100 as the limit.

Start Date: Vann recommended that we shoot for Easter Sunday. Jeff said he was concerned that our first day back, which may have glitches, would be a holiday. The group agreed that since the first Sunday in-person after more than a year should be special, we would take a chance on Easter.

Final Remarks

Teresa was asked if anybody had made small group reservations. She said that only the AV Team, Choir, and an upcoming Sew Crafting Frenzy meeting have taken advantage of the new reopening guidelines.

Vann thanked the Task Force for their faithful work over the past year. He pointed out that our goal has been, from the very beginning, to keep Saint Andrews from becoming a spreader of the virus. One infection would be one too many. He said it's regrettable that some SAUMC members have opted to leave and join other congregations, but better that than having lost them forever due to reopening too soon.

The Reopening Task Force assented to recommend to the Administrative Board to reopen for in-person, indoor worship beginning Easter Sunday, April 4, at 11:00 am. As soon as the Board approves, a public announcement will be made, and reservations and preparations will begin. Guidelines will follow those suggested at today's Task Force meeting. (SEE BELOW)

Merlin adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

ADDENDUM

Jeff Cope has enlisted the following volunteers so far:

Temperature taker (1 or 2) - Brittany, Miles (currently have 1 thermometer)

Registration desk (1 or 2) - Teresa (may need 2 tables with space in between)

Ushers (4 or 5) - Merlin, Evelyn, Stacey

"Guard" monitoring back door from parking lot (1) - Ken

Set up and break down chairs - need 2-4, can be set up Saturday if no other reservations

Floater - Iris

Iris suggested that the ERT members should be available to assist.

Post-Meeting Reminders from Vann:

- *If we have a single infection that can be traced to any onsite event, whether a small group gathering or a worship service, we will reclose and regroup.*
- *We didn't nail down the reservation method. Phone only? Online also?*
- *We didn't discuss what to do if somebody refuses to mask or social distance.*
- *The guidelines for Small Group Meetings states that all must wear a mask and if someone declines or refuses the Leader will end the meeting and disassemble asking all to leave. I think we should be consistent. No one enters w/o wearing a mask.*
- *Education Hall will be marked for 6 ft distancing.*
- *Portico entrance should be locked 10 minutes after worship starts*
- *Great Room doors will not be closed.*
- *Ushers will indicate which rows exit to ensure proper distancing on entering and exiting.*
- *No beverages or food will be allowed during worship.*

RECOMMENDATION TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

The Reopening Task Force recommends the following:

- Saint Andrews will resume in-person, indoor worship beginning April 4 at 11:00 am.
- The Great Room will be the worship venue, since it has superior air flow, movable chairs, and safer entry and exit points.
- Attendance will be by reservation.
- Masks and social distancing will be mandatory, even for fully vaccinated persons.
- All other protocols are mentioned in the notes from the Reopening Task Force Meeting of March 21.

March 21, 2021