

# **Brimfield Evangelical Free Church**

## **Guidelines for Re-Opening The Church**

On Friday, May 22 President Trump met with several key evangelical leaders and with Pastors from many different spiritual backgrounds to hear from church leaders concerning the need to allow the re-opening of churches in the United States. As a result of this meeting, President Trump called houses of worship “essential” stating that churches are “essential places that provide essential services” and he called upon governors to “allow our churches and places of worship to open right now.” The governor of Illinois has not allowed the re-opening of churches until phase 3 when it will be up to 10 people and in phase 4 it will be up to 50 people. The president also placed the responsibility for safety upon the ministers to “make sure that their congregations are safe as they gather and pray.”

In response to this presidential decree, the elders decided last Saturday, that there wasn't enough time to be sure that the CDC guidelines could be met in time for church services on May 24<sup>th</sup>. I sent a notification on May 23<sup>rd</sup> stating that we would not open the church because of the time needed to meet CDC qualification, obedience to Romans 13 and the need to understand the changes that will occur because of the COVID-19 crisis.

The elders met again last night (May 26<sup>th</sup>) to continue our discussion concerning the possibility of re-opening the church. After much discussion, **IT WAS DETERMINED BY THE ELDERS THAT WE CAN RE-OPEN THE CHURCH ON SUNDAY MAY 31, PROVIDED THAT THE CDC GUIDELINES ARE MET AND FOLLOWED BY THE CHURCH!**

### **ELDER CONCERNS:**

**1. Safety of All Who Attend:** As elders, our concern first and foremost is the safety of those who come to worship at the Brimfield Evangelical Free Church. We seek to make your worship experience not only as honoring to God as we can, but also as safe as we can for those who attend. That is why we have put together, according to the CDC guidelines, the following church guidelines for re-opening.

**2. Obedience to Scripture:** It is also the concern of the elders that we as church are following the scriptures as the guide for re-opening the church. We understand that Rom 13:1-7 & I Peter 2:13-17 commands us to be in submission to and give honor to the government that God has established to do good and to promote the safety and welfare of the people. We, however, also recognize that this submission is not an absolute submission. When God commands otherwise, we are to follow the commands of God rather than the Government. We see Scriptural examples of civil disobedience. In Exodus the midwives disobeyed Pharaoh's command to kill the Hebrew babies (Ex 1:17). Daniel disobeyed the King's order to not pray (Dan 6). The wise men disobeyed Herod when they found the baby Jesus born in Bethlehem (Matt 2:12). Peter & John determined they must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). Historically speaking, our founding fathers believed that civil disobedience is scriptural when the government unduly infringes on the rights of the people. Those Christians who live in persecution must often make the decision to disobey the government in order to worship their God together. It was on this basis and the belief that President Trump has affirmed the rights of churches to meet, that the elders made the decision to re-open the church. We believe that the right to meet together has been granted by God, affirmed by our president and is being infringed upon by our state governor with orders that are not legally binding. That is why we have agreed that the church should re-open on Sunday, May 31 according to the CDC guidelines.

**3. The Reputation of The Church:** We recognize that the re-opening of the church can have different ramifications to many different people in our church and in our community. It is not our desire to please people (Gal 1:10), but it is our desire to safeguard our reputation in the community, honor the name of Jesus Christ and promote the gospel to those outside the family of God. That is why we have established these guidelines to protect the health of those who attend, meet the guidelines of the CDC and protect our reputation and the spread of the gospel in our community rather than the spread of the virus. We do not want our church and what we represent as a body to be damaged by the possible spread of the virus into our community through the very act of our church meeting together. **We respectfully ask that those who attend our worship services would abide by the guidelines that are given below.**

**4. The Protection of Conscience:** We believe that we are making the opportunity of meeting together available to all who would like to and are able to meet together free from the fear of the COVID-19 virus. If you are sick, have a fever or cough, or are presently not feeling in good health, then we humbly ask that you remain at home rather than endanger the health of all that attend the church service. We also acknowledge that there are those who don't yet feel ready or safe to attend a public worship service at the church. We understand your position and do not in any way wish to make anyone feel obligated to attend the public worship service. We will still be providing the recorded messages on our YouTube channel for those who are not able to attend the public worship service. We also pray that we will soon be able to have the equipment that will allow us to live stream the morning worship service.

Romans 14 guides us in these matters by stating: *"Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. . . Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. . . Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."* ( Rom 14:5, 13, 19)

**IF YOU DON'T FEEL AS THOUGH YOU CAN OR SHOULD ATTEND THIS PUBLIC WORSHIP SERVICE THEN PLEASE DO NOT ATTEND!**

### **Guidelines for Re-Opening The Church**

After much discussion, the elders of the Brimfield Evangelical Free Church have put together, in compliance with the CDC guidelines, the following Guidelines for Re-Opening. We pray and encourage those who attend to please abide by these guidelines.

#### **Safety Guidelines:**

1. Front doors will be opened so that no one should need to touch the door handles to enter the church.
2. Hand sanitizer will be available, and we ask that everyone sanitize their hands upon entering the church.
3. Face Masks will be highly recommended and available for those who do not have one.
4. Social Distancing of a minimum of 6' will be maintained while in the church building.
5. Limit the size of fellowship groups to not more than 3 people.
6. Drinking Fountains will NOT be available and bottled water will be provided.
7. Coffee & Snacks will not be provided until such a time as they can be provided with sanitary conditions.

**Worship Service:** While in the sanctuary the following guidelines will be observed

1. Rows will be corded off to maintain the 6' social distancing requirements.
2. Masks will not be required during worship as long as social distancing remains 6'
3. Air circulation, both from outside and fans, will be used to provide proper air circulation.
4. An offering will not be an official part of the service but offering bags will be at the back of the church for those who wish to make an offering.

**Children's Ministry:** We will not be having children's ministry in the immediate future. This will be determined as things progress.

1. The nursery will be available for parents to meet the needs of small children but will not be staffed. Sanitation wipes will be available for sanitizing the nursery before and following its use.
2. There will be NO children's church. There will be children's bulletins, crayons and snacks provided for children under 12.
3. The gym will NOT be open due to the added sanitation needs for play/sports equipment.

**Bathroom Use:** Please try to follow the following recommendation concerning bathroom use.

1. Open the door by backing into the bathroom to avoid pushing the door with your hands.
2. Sanitizing wipes will be made available inside the bathroom. Please take a sanitizing wipe to sanitize anything that you touch – stall doors, flush handles, water faucets.
3. When leaving the bathroom please use the sanitation wipe to pull open the door and discard the sanitation wipe in the garbage can located outside the bathroom.

We ask that you abide by these guidelines and pray that God will protect us from possible contamination by the COVID-19 virus