

Bethlehem UMC  
Guiding Principles For Return To Indoor Worship  
(Based largely on Good Shepherd UMC Charlotte Guiding Principles)  
June 10, 2020

*We value being right over being first.*

Realizing that there are some churches in our area who have returned to indoor worship, we will resist the temptation to be among “those first” and will instead focus on the wisdom and clarity necessary to do it right. Our focus is on “how” rather than “when” as we value the health of our members and recognize how our health impacts the health of the community. Be assured that a re-entering resource plan is being worked on.

*We value humility over certainty.*

We will acknowledge that we really are “building the bridge as we are crossing it” and that even the experts frequently adjust their expertise during this season in which we find ourselves. So we will need much flexibility with and from the congregation and your patience. Therefore, we invite you to regard the decisions we make and time lines in the light of valuing humility.

*We value “our good” over “my rights”.*

We will dig deep into the counter-cultural wisdom of *I Corinthians 8* and *Romans 14* and in so doing equip the people of the church to set aside their rights –and their opinions and their comfort –for the collective good of the Body of Christ at Bethlehem.

*We value community.*

We use the words “living relationship” with great purpose. That’s why we value community, recognizing that people need the community to aid their growth in faith. We recognize as human beings, the value of the human touch to be a major part of any living relationship. We will value the gathering of community for the sake of relationships, whether that means gathering in small groups like Sunday school, etc. in advance of “live worship” or gathering for “live worship” in advance of small groups.

*We value a church experience that is neither awkward nor awful.*

Gathering in person and indoors will be worth the effort and the risk to pull it off when we are able to offer: 1) children’s programming; 2) musical participation and not mere performance; and 3) a physical environment that encourages conversation and interaction. Until that time, we will continue to gather at the Drive-In Worship and Face book live stream as we work on the resource plan for re-entering the church building.

Bethlehem UMC Trustee’s and Rev. Debra Short