As Massachusetts is relaxing most of it’s Covid-19 restrictions as of May 29th, the Back to Church Team and Church Board have agreed to a timetable for slowly relaxing restrictions at Bethany Church. We took into consideration the current science; vaccination rates and eligibility; Covid-19 case rates in our area; our physical space and gathering patterns; and the psychological/emotional responses of returning to practices once deemed restricted. We trust our congregation will continue to act in ways that are loving and caring of one another’s wellbeing – body, mind and spirit.

As the upcoming summer season allows us to transition back to beloved practices that nourish our personal and communal faith, we look forward to September for our major restart. May the good news of more vaccinated people and fewer cases of Covid-19 continue to trend in positive directions.

**“*Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.”***

***- Philippians 2:4 (NLT)***

**Ongoing**

* Whenever possible windows will be opened to allow for good ventilation.
* Sign-in for worship services will continue.
* Advanced reservations are no longer required.
* If someone has a positive case of COVID after attending a church gathering the Pastor should be notified.
* We will continue to keep every other pew roped off for the time being.
* We encourage everyone be mindful of social distancing.
* We will not be policing mask wearing and social distancing for church events. Every parishioner and every family will be expected to make a sound, reasonable decision about when they are ready to take off their masks and be near other people. We will not ask people whether or not they have been vaccinated.

**Beginning May 30th**

* We request that everyone continue to wear masks the entire time they are in worship.
* Congregational singing will resume.
* Passing of the Peace will resume by having members remain in their pews and sharing a sign of peace without handshaking (similar to past practices during flu seasons).

**Beginning June 6th**

* We request that everyone continue to wear masks the entire time they are in worship.
* Communion will once again be served to the congregation. The congregation will be encouraged to sanitize their hands before Communion (sanitizer provided in the pews). Single cups and individually cut up pieces of bread will be offered and the Deacons will be in possession of the plates and trays as much as possible. As always, the elements will be prepared by someone wearing gloves. The common loaf broken by the Pastor will not be added to the plates. For those not yet comfortable with this format, pre-packaged bread and juice will still be available upon entering the sanctuary.
* An Offering will be collected during the service of worship with the Deacons in possession of the plates as much as possible. For those not yet comfortable with this format, plates will continue to be left near the sanctuary doors.
* Children will be invited to come forward for the Message to All of God’s Children.

**Beginning June 13**

* Per CDC and state guidelines, you may choose not to wear a mask while in the building.

* Following the CDC and state guidelines, we will encourage unvaccinated people to continue to wear face-coverings in indoor settings and when they can’t socially distance.
* People who are not from the same family are welcome to sit together if they feel comfortable doing so.

**Beginning July 4**

* Coffee Hour will resume, with the intent to have it outside in the portico area. In very inclement weather, Coffee Hour will be held in the Fellowship Hall.
* Food (individually packaged) and beverages will be served by volunteers. There will be no self-service for the time being.

**Use of Church by Groups**

* The use of Fellowship Hall and other rooms by outside groups can resume as of June 1st.
* Each group is responsible for their members following any CDC or state guidelines.
* Opening windows will be encouraged.

**Masks and Social Distancing**

* Remember that mask wearing does not always equate to being unvaccinated.
* It is understood that different people will be ready to take off their masks and sit near one another at different times.
* Some vaccinated people who are comfortable dropping social distancing may not yet be comfortable taking off their masks.
* People are free to continue to wear masks as long as they like, and that they will be respected if they choose to do so.