Reopen Committee meeting on October 26, 2020

In attendance: Diane Segelhorst, Jane Felsentreger, Judy Tribby, Bonnie Weinhold, Penny Courtney, Michelle Angeli

Absent: Patrice Jenstrom, Jackie Abend, Zac Huffman

The meeting opened with prayer. The following topics were discussed.

1. Update on groups allowed to use the church and precautions included.
   * Hygiene kits for Lutheran World Relief: Bonnie wants to get families to assemble the kits from the items collected during the Bolt VBS and items she procured to fill out the kits. After discussion, it was agreed that she would divide up the materials and each family would work at a table assembling complete kits. Bonnie is targeting Saturday evening, November 14 if families are available. Potential families include the Dugans, Webers, Smiths and Ketemas. Diane, Judy and Jane also offered to help if needed. Diane volunteered to find out what time Life Bridge is done at the church on Sundays in case she needs to shift it to a Sunday. After the meeting, Diane confirmed with Pastor Juan via Zac that they are done and out of the church no later than 5:30 pm on Sundays.
   * Groups already approved include the Quilters weekly meeting, Quilters’ Annual Sale, Life Bridge weekly Fellowship, Ladies’ Breakfast, Ladies’ Lunch, Charlton’s Music group, Food Drives, and (post meeting) Church Library.
   * For all groups – the kitchen is still closed. The quilters requested to use the microwave only to reheat items during their three days there, and it was approved.
   * The BoD had already discussed the AA groups, and agreed that we are not yet comfortable with welcoming them back. Zac Huffman has an ongoing dialogue with our point of contact with the AA groups.
2. Collections going forward – Thanksgiving food, Empty Nesters Toy collection, Christmas food/gift collection, Undie Sunday
   * Thanksgiving food: Easels will be set up with items needed. These easels will be placed outside the church both before and after service on November 1 and 8 for people to select items they will provide. On November 8 and 15, collection boxes will be placed at the top of the stairs on the office side. For those weeks, Jane will move the check-in table to the opposite side of the stairs.
   * The Empty Nesters Christmas toy collection that the Hausners have coordinated at the Christmas Party the last several years will change this year. All congregation members will be offered the chance to bring an unwrapped toy to church on November 29. These toys will be brought to the communion rail on that Sunday as people enter the church. The toys will be blessed during the service and removed immediately following the service, and delivered to Lutheran Mission Society the following day. This is separate from the Christmas food/gift drive we are organizing through the County Department of Social Services, which will take place later in Advent.
   * Similar procedures to those used for Thanksgiving food collection will be followed for Christmas food, Christmas gifts, and Undie Sunday. Christmas food and gift collection dates will be December 6, 13 and 20.
   * Penny reported that Sharon Heinekin remains in contact with the Winter Relief organizers. It is unclear whether or how the housing of the homeless at local churches will take place this year. However, Sharon still intends to collect toiletries and underwear/socks in January.
3. Potential seating changes to allow more people: The committee discussed ways to increase seating in the Sanctuary. It was agreed that until the number of attendees increases, the current seating plan is working. However, we expect more people for Christmas Eve services. It was agreed that for Christmas Eve services, we do not want to have overflow in the Fellowship Hall watching the live streaming. Instead, we will increase seating as follows: One side of the sanctuary will be reserved for families, sitting in every other pew. The opposite side of the sanctuary will be used for singles/couples, and every pew will be used. In the first pew, a single or couple would be seated at each end. In the second pew, a single would be seated in the middle. This pattern would alternate using every pew. Overall, we expect this to increase our capacity by six singles on one side, plus probably 12-15 more on the family side, for a total seating capacity of around 65-70 per service.
4. Christmas services – do we need reservations? All agreed that yes we should require reservations, and we should also use assigned seating to maximize number of people fitting in the church. Michelle volunteered that the Church Planning Center could be used to register for services. Registration for Christmas services would be opened on the first Sunday in Advent, and seating will be assigned on a first reserved/first seated basis. Diane will make a seating chart based on the reservations received. The ushers will need to manage the seating and make sure the seating chart is followed. Penny mentioned that we should make sure any visitors can be accommodated. Jane mentioned that if people show up without reservations, we can seat them in the Narthex on chairs or in the conference room. Diane also mentioned that if people check our website for service times, hopefully they will notice that reservations are required. Diane can also try to make sure there are at least a few seats in the sanctuary reserved for guests or members who just show up. (After the meeting – maybe we can reserve those front row seats nobody ever wants to sit in for them? LOL)
5. Singing in church – requested for Christmas Eve and Lessons and Carols.  Much discussion surrounded this topic. Several scientific articles were distributed prior to the meeting for committee members to read. Judy opened the discussion stating that the three important issues are masking, which we are doing, separation distance, which we are trying to manage, and ventilation, which we have not been doing anything about. Diane stated that the HVAC fans can be set to run continuously, and we will do this. However, those fans do not have HEPA filters and only recirculate inside air, so this is only moderately useful. We discussed opening the upper part of the windows, if the temperatures are not too severe. We will let the congregation know that the open windows are to allow for safer ventilation during singing and to dress appropriately. Diane mentioned that length of exposure is also a criteria, and we fall into the “long” exposure time mentioned by several studies since our time of exposure is over 15 minutes. We also discussed requesting that the congregation keep their singing soft, making sure that masks were worn properly, and whether or not soloists/ensembles could sing unmasked.

After much discussion, the following decisions were made:

* + The 4:00 service on Christmas Eve be a “singing” service.
  + The 7:30 service will be a “non-singing” service.
  + The 11:00 service is TBD (partially based on availability of a tech crew,) but probably a “singing” service.
  + The Lessons and Carols service on December 27 will also be a singing service. The congregations will sing as few verses of each hymn as possible to still tell the story being told.
  + At the beginning of each singing service, Pastor will announce that singing should be done quietly and masked.
  + We will open the upper part of the windows during singing services and will let the congregation know in advance that it may be cool in the church and to dress appropriately.
  + No unmasked singing by soloists or ensembles will be included. Michelle stated that all the music will be prerecorded for the Christmas services. Some songs will be for congregational singing and some will be presentational pieces during which the congregation will meditate.
  + In January, we will revisit the issue of singing in church, but the initial January services will be non-singing until we have time to discuss further.
  + AFTER THE MEETING: when Diane reported on the committee decisions at the Board of Director’s (BoD) meeting, it was proposed to survey the congregation about their preferences. Diane will develop survey questions relating to singing in church as well as other issues. Diane will forward the draft survey to the BoD and the Worship Committee prior to distribution.