



*Continuing the work of Jesus.
Peacefully. Simply. Together.*

MID-ATLANTIC DISTRICT
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MEMO

To: Mid-Atlantic Congregations, Boards and Leadership Teams, and Pastors

**From: Mid-Atlantic District Leadership Team and
District Executive Minister Gene Hagenberger**

Date: Monday, June 08, 2020

Subject: Recommendation about Opening Churches

Due to the continued serious threat of Covid-19 and its unknown potential long-term health effects, the Mid-Atlantic District Leadership Team recommends that “best practice” for June, July, and August is for congregations to continue worshiping and meeting “online,” and if worship services are scheduled for the summer, we recommend they be outdoor services following social distancing guidelines. We further recommend that when congregations reopen they continue an online option for those who continue social distancing.

At the least we expect congregations that do plan to regather for worship, meetings, and/or events over the next three months to follow the safety and social distancing guidelines of their state and county governments for religious organizations. That certainly means wearing masks that cover the nose and mouth; maintaining a minimum of 6 feet of separation between non family members and not shaking hands, touching elbows, hugging, or kissing; using projection rather than hymnals, pew Bibles, and bulletins; not singing aloud; not sharing food; encouraging circulation by opening doors and windows, and deep cleaning between meetings. Here is a link to Church of the Brethren guidance about Covid-19 response, of which all congregations should make themselves aware:
<https://covid19.brethren.org/guidance-for-congregations/>.

We recognize the social distancing fatigue that many of us are feeling, as well as the emotional toll of the disruption of what was our normal experience. We feel the strong need to regather with our church families. We also know that when the doors open there will be those who out of a compelling sense of Christian duty will present themselves for service even though they feel unsafe in doing so. Many of these will be among the most vulnerable to the serious consequences of the virus. We also recognize that God has used this coronavirus time to inspire a renewed sense of evangelism, of creative, thoughtful attention to connecting and reconnecting with people. Many of our congregations report increased online “attendance.” Most of our congregations report that God and committed givers have sustained our budgets. In light of all of this we urge patience and prayer. Patience as we look to the new thing that God appears to be doing, and patience and prayer for a vaccine and/or treatments and/or understandings that will sooner rather than later provide increased protection from this threat to health and society. Finally, we strongly urge you dear brothers and sisters to continue to look beyond your interests alone, to the interests of others (Ph 2:4).