

Classis Holland CRC
Encouraging, Equipping, Uniting



May 18, 2020

To: The Churches of Classis Holland

From: The Classical Executive Team

Re: Reflections on returning to in-person worship gatherings

Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Acts 2:46 notes that the Spirit-born church regularly met together in the temple courts and in their homes. In-person worship and fellowship have always been the beating heart of the Christian community. Sadly, for several weeks that practice has been curtailed by the highly transmittable and dangerous Coronavirus. As each week passes there is a growing desire for a return to communal life. In light of that desire, the Classical Executive Team met on Friday, May 15 and drafted several broad principles to guide classical congregations as they consider returning to regular worship gatherings. Those principles include:

Principle 1: Lean towards a “go slow” restart

As health authorities are pointing out, there is no substantive difference about the virus today than when the stay at home order was first announced. The capacity for the virus to be transmitted remains the same. Extreme caution should be our watch-word.

Principle 2: Respect the advice of those in authority

Romans 13 calls us to be “subject to the governing authorities.” As a classis we want to be good citizens. The CET recommends that public gathering guidelines provided by the governor and public health officials should be honored.

Principle 3: Exercise great care when reopening

Being careful suggests several practices. Singing in enclosed spaces is problematic. Multiple persons in a single pew is not advised. Shaking hands and passing plates is no longer acceptable. At every turn churches should invest in best practices that keep everyone healthy.

Principle 4: Begin preparing today

Churches should take seriously the importance of preparation for reopening. Time should be invested in working through all possible challenges, developing a reopening plan and determining how that plan will be communicated and executed. Preparation begins today.

Principle 5: Consider the uniqueness of your congregation

Every church has a unique set of circumstances that need to be factored into a decision about reopening. Those circumstances include being young vs. old, small vs. large, rural vs. urban, room to spread out vs. having crowded worship spaces and the ability to conduct worship outdoors vs. worshipping inside enclosed spaces.

Principle 6: Promote unity, peace and respect

The discussion about reopening has proven divisive in some congregations. The CET encourages leaders of churches to speak to honestly with their congregations about the importance of unity in the body of Christ.

Principle 7: Point to the sovereign care of our Heavenly Father

Psalm 91 celebrates that we dwell under the shelter of the Most High and highlights that we need not fear “the plague that destroys at midday.” This is an important time to remind God’s people that we can “rest in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1b).

The Classical Executive Team would like to help churches through the process of reopening by keeping you informed about what congregations in Classis Holland and other classes are doing with respect to in-person worship. To assist with this, a Google document will be created and shared. Our humble request is that someone from your congregation updates this information regularly.

As CET gains greater clarity about the reopening of our community for public gatherings, we will draft additional communications related to safe practices for reopening. CET would appreciate receiving from you any safe practices documents we can share with others.

As a Classical Executive Team, we are praying that you will be given wisdom to know the best next steps as you consider a return to in-person worship. Please let us know if you have questions or comments. Please contact any of the following:

Rev. Doug Fauble, CET Chairperson (dougfauble@att.net)
Rev. Matt Stob, Classis Chair for 2020 (mstob@maranatha-crc.com)
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On Behalf of the Classical Executive Team,

Rev. Doug Fauble