

## **HILLSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN**

Thanks Hillside family for your prayers and support as we navigate together through uncharted territory. Thanks to the over 300 members who filled out the survey. This was extremely helpful in formulating a plan going forward.

Let us recap the steps we've taken to formulate a plan:

- a. Listening to you—through feedback you've shared with staff, shepherd leaders and Council members, both informally, and formally through the survey.
- b. Having staff absorb the congregational feedback and create a recommendation
- c. Augmenting the staff's thinking with an advisory task force comprised of a range of individuals throughout the congregation representing different ages and backgrounds

On Monday night May 18, Council approved (with some small refinements), a plan recommended by the Hillside staff, with input from the advisory task force.

Before going into the plan, let us share a few important thoughts. Please understand that this plan is not set in stone but is considered to be a working document that assists in giving direction into an unknown future; it is subject to change as we learn more.

### **Eight Principles in Setting the Plan**

1. Focus on what is best for the whole Hillside community (e.g. members, attenders and guests of all ages) (cf. Philippians 2:3-4)
2. Be mindful of and care for the most vulnerable - the elderly, those with pre-existing conditions (e.g. immunocompromised), frontline medical personnel, and their families. (cf. Matthew 25:40)
3. Be proactive in our planning and preparation to minimize the possibility of anyone contracting the virus and any resulting consequences from the virus.
4. Honor federal, state, and local guidelines, and denominational recommendations. (cf. Romans 13:1). It is important to note that contrary to popular opinion, churches **are** able to meet under Michigan's Shelter-at-Home Restrictions (see March 24 Executive Order 2020-21). That said, churches are encouraged by the state of Michigan to follow state guidelines with respect to gatherings. We intend to continue to do so.
5. Seek to honor differing concerns and desires with respect to safety, reopening, etc and approach our Christian brothers and sisters with humility and grace when we differ.
6. Embrace flexibility while creating stability through predictable patterns where possible.
7. Create clear boundaries and guidelines, and then empower teams to make decisions about best practices based on those boundaries and guidelines.
8. Strive to be Christ to one another and the world, follow the Holy Spirit's leading in coming "alongside" one another, staying connected, and promoting the community of Christ. Seek to learn what that looks like in a "new normal".

### **Clarifying Terminology**

Clarifying terminology may be helpful as you review the Hillside plan. The 4 steps in the Hillside plan correspond to Stages 3-6 of the Michigan Safe Start Plan.

Hillside

State of Michigan Safe Start Six Stage Plan

Step One  
Step Two  
Step Three  
Step Four

Stage 3 (Flattening)  
Stage 4 (Improving)  
Stage 5 (Containing)  
Stage 6 (Post Pandemic)

You may also be aware of Federal phasing guidelines:

- Federal Phase One (strict social distancing protocols) relates to Michigan's Stage 3
- Federal Phase Two (moderate social distancing protocols) relates to Michigan's Stage 4
- Federal Phase Three (limited social distancing protocols) relates to Michigan's Stage 5
- Federal Phase Four relates to Michigan's Stage 6 (post pandemic).

For more information on this including a full diagram of Michigan's Six Stage Safe Start Plan, please see the last page in this document.

### **The Hillside Community Plan (for a 1 page overview see end of document)**

#### **Step One** (Stage 3: State of Michigan)

We are currently in Step One of the Hillside plan.

#### **Step Two** (Stage 4: State of Michigan)

What is Step Two for Hillside, and when do we envision moving to Step Two?

- a. When we move partially or fully to stage 4 (Improving) of Michigan's Safe Start Plan
- b. When gatherings of people (under 10, 20 or 50) are possible

We heard on Thursday, May 21 that gatherings of under 10 are now possible in our state. There is at least a partial move to stage 4 of Michigan's Safe Start Plan, so we would consider ourselves to be in the very early part of Step Two.

#### *Communal Worship*

Given the current guideline of gatherings limited to under 10 people, we do not envision communal worship returning at Hillside at this time. Even once we can have gatherings of under 50 people, once we factor in those participating in the service and in the sound booth, this means a very small number able to worship in the auditorium. With a church of over 1200 members, there is no clear path at this time to communal worship in Step Two.

#### *Other Church Activities*

The church building will remain effectively closed.

Hillside ministry directors are working together to determine what existing small groups (e.g. Men's Bible Study) of under 10 people might make sense to use the Hillside church building starting Monday, June 1.

A formal plan with tight procedures is being developed by Andy Pasma and the staff to ensure the safety of a small group who may desire to use the building. All requests must be routed through the church office and approved by Andy Pasma, Executive Administrator (with at least three days notice). In order to ensure proper cleaning procedures and adherence to physical distancing guidelines, there will be strict protocols in terms of building use, adhering to the principles outlined earlier.

#### **Step Three** (Stage 5: State of Michigan)

What is Step Three, and when do we envision moving to Step Three?

- a. When we move to stage 5 (Containing) of Michigan's Safe Start Plan
- b. When gatherings of a considerable size are possible (e.g. 150)

We have no clear idea of the date of stage 5, nor do we know the gathering size limitation. We expect that it could be up to under 150, but that is unclear at this point.

### *Communal Worship*

When Michigan (or region 2—Grand Rapids) does move to stage 5, we expect to begin communal worship. We would begin communal worship:

- a. while honoring the limitation on size gatherings provided
- b. following the recommended physical distancing protocols provided at the time
- c. adhering to the eight principles outlined earlier in this document.

Some of the protocols we see as being in place during step 3 for Hillside:

- Appropriate physical distancing (as determined at that time period)
- Greeters will not shake hands
- Doors will be propped open
- Likely only one Sunday service to allow for thorough cleaning and sanitizing. We would offer at least one other service during the week, and potentially a third service. We would need some type of system to ensure we limit to the appropriate gathering size.
- Hands free hand sanitizer dispensers at key traffic areas throughout the building
- Bathrooms would be open with hand sanitizer dispensers just outside bathroom as an extra precaution
- Closing off of certain portions of the building, and of doors not in use
- No shaking of hands
- Worship team will model physical distancing from platform
- No bulletins, contact cards or pens in chair backs
- No coffee or tea would be offered, at least early on in this stage
- Offerings will be done online or in a collection basket/box in the back of the auditorium
- Communion will be accomplished with individual pre-packaged sets we are procuring.
- Dismissal will likely be done in a structured manner to avoid crowding exits.
- There would be no children's ministries during this step/stage.

Items still being evaluated for this Step:

- How open will the church building be during the week? Likely on a more limited basis.
- What about the use of face masks—will they be required, recommended, or encouraged? This will depend on the guidance from federal and local health officials at the time (for both Step Two and Step Three)
- Could one of our services be a family worship service where children could attend with parents, and be shorter in length? This is being considered.
- Could one of our services be for the more elderly and/or at risk? This is being considered.
- How do we think about congregational singing? Current protocols as of mid-May are suggesting no singing due to the highly contagious nature of the virus. That may change over time as we learn more. Certainly, communal singing is a key part of communal worship.
- Might we offer an outdoor service from time to time? There are certainly challenges with outdoor services. At the same time, there is less risk of contagion.

### **Step Four**

(Stage 6: State of Michigan)

What is Step Four, and when do we envision moving to Step Four?

- a. When we move to Stage Six (post pandemic) of Michigan's Safe Start Plan

Again, we have no clear idea of the date of stage six, but we are assuming there will no longer be any limitation on size of gatherings. We will be back to a "new normal!"

We still expect that we will follow health guidelines issued at the time until a vaccine is available.

**A Disclaimer worth repeating**

As noted earlier, please understand that this plan is not set in stone but is considered to be a working document that assists in giving direction into an unknown future; it is subject to change as we learn more.

We also know that it may be necessary to move between steps/stages if outbreaks reoccur. As we move through these steps, participants are reminded to be aware of the risks to themselves and others of the spread of this disease. As long as the virus remains in our community and until there is a vaccine, there will be inherent risk of gathering together. We will need to be mindful of the risks to ourselves and to others. We will also need to keep in mind to honor differing concerns and desires with respect to safety, reopening, etc and to approach our Christian brothers and sisters with humility and grace when we differ (Psalm 133:1).

The Hillside Community Council

*Elders*

Ron Apol  
Sue Harkema  
Dave Miedema  
Laura Pothoven  
Ken Taveling  
Tim Zwart

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Eric Boonstra  
Harold Mast  
Adam Ringnalda  
Scott Wierenga

**HILLSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH COVID-19 TRANSITION PLAN—MAY 22, 2020**

**Hillside**

**Step 1 (past two months)**

**MI Six Stage Safe Start Plan**

**Stage 3**

**Step 2 (just entering)**

Worship—Livestream

**MI Stage 4 (partial--current gathering limit <10)**

Small groups under 10 with  
can meet in building with advance notice  
starting June 1

**Step 3**

**Communal worship**

Within recommended gathering size

**MI Stage 5 (larger gatherings—size limit TBD)**

Groups under xxx can meet at church  
with advance notice

**Step 4 (post pandemic!)**

“New normal” pre-vaccine

**MI Stage 6 (post pandemic)**

## Source List & Additional Resources

[Kent County Health Department COVID Data](#) – Kent County Health Department [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, And Homes](#)—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [What Relaunching the Church Might Look Like Over the Next 3-12 Months](#)—Christianity Today [Coming Back Together After Coronavirus](#)—CRCNA’s *Church Juice* [Community and Faith-Based Organizations](#)—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Basic Guide for Returning to Your Church Building After COVID-19](#)—Georgia Baptist Mission Board [48 Questions to Ask Before Reopening Your Church](#)—Ken Braddy, LifeWay Christian Resources [Children’s Ministry During COVID-19](#)—CRCNA’s Faith Formation Ministries [Sustainability in Worship](#)—CRCNA’s *Church Juice* [Guidelines for West Michigan Places of Worship as the COVID-19 Pandemic Continues](#)—CRCNA [The Risks—Know Them—Avoid Them](#) by Dr. Erin Bromage [How Long Does the Coronavirus Live on Surfaces?](#) – WebMD [MI Safe Start Plan](#) – State of Michigan [COVID-Safe Church Guidelines](#) – Premier Productions, [What your church must know before opening your building](#), Fact and Trends.net

# MI SAFE START PLAN



