

Hello... welcome to the Mid-Week Connection for November 18, 2020. WOW! – What a week it has been!

Just 10 days ago, we were talking about and planning to bring back the seats that were taken out of the Worship Center in June; and today, we are temporarily back online for our Sunday & Wednesday gatherings.

It truly brings meaning to the words of **Proverbs 27:1**: **Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.**

Indeed... that was the case on November 10th and within 7 days, new proclamations were made, superseding the old ones, requiring everyone to discover and apply them in their personal context.

That said, I want to take some time today to clarify a few things as it pertains to our decision to go back online for three weeks and what the Governor's proclamation on Monday night means for TMC moving forward.

First however, this one announcement

This Sunday, November 22, is our annual Thanksgiving Celebration.

- The service will be streamed live with music that will encourage us to express gratitude to God for His blessings,
- Christie Rus will share her testimony of faith in Jesus through the waters of baptism.
- I will share a message about being thankful in times of adversity.

The live stream begins promptly at 10 AM... it's best to connect 5 minutes early! I hope you will be part of this special online worship gathering.

Ok...as I said, prior to November 10th we had been planning to reinstall seating in the Worship Center that had been removed in June... in fact we were looking to do that on Sunday, November 15.

But then, Governor Reynolds tightened down restrictions, that from our understanding at the time would have made meeting in person very challenging; we scrambled to meet the spirit of the mandate.

Later that evening, when watching the news, I heard a reporter say that the mandate did not apply to churches nor to the local schools.

Later that same night the Elders, Deacons and I discussed the new mandate to include, the idea that churches might be exempt, *we were not sure of the accuracy of that at the time, ...*

...and as we prayed and discussed the implications of various decisions, we believed that God would have us commit to 3 Sundays and Wednesdays of online ministry instead of in person ministry.

So, the decision was made to comply with the Governor's mandate whether we as a church were required to or not. Believing that the decision was led by the Lord, we stand by that and will fulfill the commitment we made.

However, in Monday's proclamation, the Governor extended her mandates through December 10th. With an

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increased understanding of the exemption churches and schools fall under, it should not be assumed that we will extend our current curtailment of ministry.

The Elders, Deacons and I will continue praying, consulting and assessing the local context that TMC is in and you will be the first to know of any developments beyond the current decision we have implemented.

Please know this... While not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, the leaders of TMC are committed both individually and corporately to lead in a way that honors Christ and benefits this congregation and the people of our community.

We may not get it right every time... and when you think we have gotten wrong, please respectfully let us know, then commit to pray for us...

but I encourage you with every fiber of my being... let us not allow the chaos of our present world, nor our spiritual enemy that leads it, to tear us apart for that would not glorify God nor our fellow man.

We will get through this, and I pray stronger than ever, more ready to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

That is a brief explanation of how we arrived at where we currently are.

At this point I want to transition to explain the Governor's current mandates and how they impact TMC.

- **Keep in mind that all I am attempting to do at this point is explain, I am not saying that we should do one thing or the other.**

So... how does Monday's proclamation by the Governor impact TMC?

The impact is minimal.

We now understand that by constitutional law the church is exempt from the types of governmental mandates that are being made... **but here's the key ... only as it pertains to gatherings that are of a religious/spiritual nature.**

For TMC that means that...

- ABF's, Life Groups, Youth Group, AWANA, Bible studies, Circles, Men's breakfast...

Any meeting that is legitimately of a religious/spiritual nature, according to our faith tradition, as they say, can be carried out without restriction.

- No mask requirement
- Only that we strive to ensure reasonable distancing of those officiating and participating in the meeting
- In other words, what we were doing from June – November 8 fits the bill.

On the other side of the fence, things like wedding or funeral receptions, Wednesday night meals, ladies sewing, holiday parties... things like that, do fall under the mandates.

- No more than 15 can gather.

So... while we will maintain our decision for online ministry for Sunday and Wednesday through December 2nd, other groups and ministry meetings, taking place outside of those two days, can utilize the building without restriction effectively immediately...

If the meeting legitimately falls under Religious/Spiritual gatherings, there is no restriction, only the need to ensure reasonable distancing among those gathering.

If the gathering does not meet the definition of Religious/Spiritual gatherings, then the 15-person cap will apply.

Contact Ellen Fisher to reserve space.

Clear as mud... right?

To help us make better sense out of all this, we have created a document that lays out all the rules and stipulations for use of TMC facilities in writing. We hope this keeps the confusion down and gives you the pertinent information that you need.

You can access the document from the homepage of our website or there is link in the email that brought you this video, where you can download and print.

In conclusion

This has been one of the hardest things to lead through that I have had to deal with in my 27 years of pastoral ministry.

People are so polarized on the topic, with very strong opinions that when violated seem to bring out a frustration and anger that I have never seen before.

Truly, it seems that no matter which way you lead, half of the people you know are going to be upset.

I hate that because myself and all the leaders at TMC truly desire to glorify Christ and help our fellow man know Him and become like Him.

That is our only agenda.

So, know this moving forward... whether you agree with the way we lead or do not, we are doing everything we know how to do, to follow Jesus in this matter.

We are His church; it is His glory that is at stake, and we do not want to do anything to jeopardize that.

If you think we have gotten it wrong, please tell us respectfully and then pray for us. But let us not be pulled apart by fear, accusation, assumptions or any other of Satan's devious schemes.

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We will get through this and we will continue working to make TMC a disciple-making ministry that sees sinners saved, and the saved become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.