



WILLOW GLEN BIBLE CHURCH

Knowing God • Living Freely • Loving All

02/13/2021

Message about our Sunday meetings:

Given the recent news about court cases related to the state of California's policies on indoor worship gatherings we wanted to give you an update. The US Supreme Court ruled that California cannot restrict indoor gatherings for religious services while also permitting other industries, such as shops and the film industry to continue inside with reduced capacity. Santa Clara County proceeded to not allow *any* indoor gatherings and this is still being disputed in court. It is worth mentioning we are currently the only county in the state of California with this policy.

We have consistently said that we desire to do what is safe for our church and the health of the community at large. Meeting outside is the safest way for us all to gather at present. Thus, we will continue this path and at times we may only be online due to weather or other logistical issues.

With that said, the issues related to California public policy during the pandemic and concerns about church and state business is not a simple matter. While it is a good thing to have more consistent policies across all kinds of human activity our staff leadership has not seen it necessary to challenge these public policies. But we have had other rationale we have strenuously kept before us from the beginning.

It is important to be transparent about our rationale in a time with so little trust in various institutions in American life. The first reason is health, both physical and spiritual. We were concerned early on that this pandemic would stretch out beyond a few months, and that prolonged quarantine with little human interaction would be deeply problematic for people's mental and spiritual health. We have all suffered in various ways, even without contracting the disease. Regular participation in the life of a church, through prayer, scripture, and community (Gen. 2:18; Dt. 8:3; Heb. 10:25) is vital for the well being of us all.

The second reason is really a metaphor we latched on to early on. Some people will be in the "slow lane", being extremely cautious. Others will be in the "fast lane," not very cautious and very eager to get back to normal. Many others will be in the "middle lanes," slightly more cautious than the fast lane or slightly less cautious than the slow lane. We are doing our best to find solutions that work to provide physical and spiritual health for people in all lanes. We ask that everyone

would seek to be understanding of the levels of risk people are willing to take (Phil. 2:3-5).

The third reason is more practical. The capacity limits on indoor gatherings is quite restrictive. We can only accommodate 50 people at 20% capacity, and we are not supposed to sing or chant. Many of the smaller rooms cannot accommodate even a small group when social distancing is accounted for. In addition, once a space is used it would require several hours of downtime and cleanup before it can be used again. An outdoor service is easier and safer for staff and volunteers, and handles far more people. A full outdoor service is a better worship experience than either online or in a sparsely populated room. There are tradeoffs in any of these arrangements of course, but for now, live-streaming the outdoor service is the best "less than ideal" option.

In addition, we have also taken the opportunity to do some improvements. It has taken time to arrange for new carpet and flooring throughout the main level of the church. This project will take approximately 2-3 months. This means that we will not be indoors for Easter. It has also required the removal of our pews, whose cost to repair and refinish is prohibitive. Temporarily, we will use chairs when we return inside. Chairs will allow us to accommodate more people inside and maintain social distancing. We will consider the question of chairs vs. new pews at a later date. Lastly and providentially, the 70 year old sump pump in the basement went out and is currently being replaced. This means we will have no running water in most of the main building for approximately three weeks.

As long as weather permits, we would like to take advantage of one of the main pleasures of the Bay Area, its temperate weather. We are all eager for things to return to normal, and Lord willing they eventually will. But until then, let us persevere in faith and may the Lord use this pandemic to strengthen our walk with him.

Thank you for your patience,
Your WGBC Staff