

Guidelines for Montavilla Church gatherings during COVID-19 [September 2020]

Recently one of our leaders at Montavilla Church asked the elders about the possibility of meeting in small groups in-person during the COVID-19 restrictions. The leader stated that their group really needed some in-person community, and they wanted to do it in a way that is in line with the public guidelines, and with the church guidelines.

The elders met and acknowledged the need to begin the process of meeting in small groups and agreed to the following:

“To allow Montavilla sponsored small groups to meet, as long as they strictly follow the current official Covid-19 guidelines for those small meetings.”

This was passed with the strong provision that the small groups adhere to the state and county guidelines. Note the reference to *current* guidelines. If the state or county guidelines change, the group meetings will need to adhere to the new guidelines.

Here are the current guidelines for Multnomah County --

Faith Based & Community Groups COVID-19 Guidance Multnomah County – August 12, 2020

- Wear face coverings in indoor public spaces and outdoors.
- Maintain at least six feet between people from different households.
- Avoid handshakes and hugs.
- Do not share food or drink.
- Keep a list of who attended public and private events. Public health may need this information for a contact tracing investigation».

How We Move Forward - Together

We all know how hard it is to be separated from our own family members. Our Montavilla family feels the same way during COVID-19. We have mentioned before that your church leadership has a real commitment to you, our Montavilla family and also our neighbors in 97216, to adhere to the recommended guidelines to keep everyone safe from the virus. Our approach is to not just do what is “permissible” but also consider what is “wise”. Overall we want to glorify the Lord in and outside the Montavilla family.

We also understand there are no perfect solutions to gathering. As we walk this journey, you quickly find varied opinions, preferences and personalities. As a result we recognize not everyone will be on the same page.

The guidelines are not meant to function as commands or to be used to force individuals into anything they do not want to do. Instead, our goal is to equip you to love and protect those around you, even if you yourself are not at risk. As we navigate this transition back to in-person meetings, we believe Jesus is calling our church community to reflect and maintain three distinct values: Wisdom, Unity, and Community.

WISDOM - The Lord has and is perfect wisdom. We call on Him for wisdom in protecting our vulnerable, but also to learn from and defer to doctors and governing authorities in this time, gaining insight and discernment wherever it may be found. (Proverbs 1:5; 19:20)

UNITY - Recently Pastor Dave Ahl shared from John 17 about enjoying the unity of being one in Christ with the Father through the Spirit. Ephesians 4:1-6 talks about the importance of unity in the Body and each of us walking in the Spirit in a manner that encourages that unity. The writers of the New Testament teach that we are one body with many members, who at times lay aside their own preferences to “keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-6)

COMMUNITY - We recognize that the isolation COVID-19 has caused is painful. We have deep needs to be able to gather together to become more like Jesus and grow individually and corporately. (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Given these values your leadership recommends the following guidelines for gathering during COVID-19.

1. We support the current Phase 1 recommendations for Multnomah and Clackamas counties pertaining to social distancing, masks and the number of people who can gather. Here is the webpage with current information concerning Multnomah County faith-based groups:

<https://multco.us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/faith-based-and-community-groups-covid-19-guidance>

2. We recommend meeting outside as often as possible to further restrict possible exposure.
3. Although Montavilla generally has a Sunday School structure with respective age groups, during COVID-19 we recommend gathering in-person based on your geographical location, support groups or Bible studies. Observe meeting guidelines such as adequate space, social distancing and masks (as required).
4. As many have done, we recommend the continued use of virtual meetings through applications like Zoom and Facebook Live, etc. This can be done based on many factors, eg, Sunday School class, geographical area, etc.

As we look to the future, the elders will continue to evaluate the wisdom of meeting as a congregation in the church building after we are out of the COVID Phase 1 restrictions.

We are here to serve,

The elder board