

Surprise Church

Imagine a church that leaves the building...

October 27, 2020

Greetings Surprise Family!

Since we opted for a 3-week pause for in-person worship gatherings, we've been updating our policies in preparation for our **worship restart date of Sunday, November 8**. We will be adopting the following plans to protect the vulnerable and to comply with both state guidelines and our facility rental agreements:

- 1) **9:30 Mask-Mandatory Gathering** – Our first gathering will require masks for everyone not on stage, including all team members and guests. Surfaces and chairs will be sanitized before worship and guests will still be seated in social distanced sections.
- 2) **11:00 AM Mask-Optional Gathering** – Our 11 AM gathering will recommend masks but not require them for guests. Due to the extended timeframe in which they serve in close proximity, volunteers and staff will still be required to wear masks. Surfaces and chairs will be sanitized before this gathering and guests will still be seated in social distanced sections.

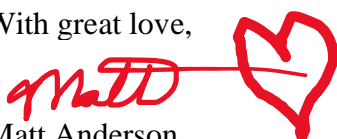
Politics - We know that masks have become a political issue, and that alone they can't *prevent* the spread of COVID-19. However, masks are among the measures that may help to slow the spread, including adequate sleep, proper nutrition, hand-washing, sanitizing surfaces, and social distancing. And since many with medical conditions feel unsafe in spaces that don't require masks, we feel called to graciously accommodate them until the threat level is lowered.

Jesus calls us to far greater sacrifices. After having "the bug" myself, I'll be immune from COVID-19 for several months. Yet, I'll be wearing a mask on Sundays out of concern for the spiritually weak and the physically vulnerable (see the above case study for a helpful Biblical reference). As a church of *good older brothers* who gladly inconvenience ourselves to reach lost sons, our Surprise leaders will eagerly give up good our parking spots, our seats at the table, or our places in line, all to help guests feel welcome. And yes, we who are mature will gladly wear a mask if it helps a vulnerable person feel safe enough to join us for worship. If Jesus Christ calls His followers to give up our very lives in service to the Gospel, this is a small thing indeed.

Great things are coming. Our **Generosity Party** will culminate on November 15 with the celebration of communion in worship, and we're eager to dive into the **Christmas season** after that! Meanwhile, our **Community Groups** continue gathering in person and online to build relationships, grow spiritually, and laugh often! Please pray for these endeavors as together we become *the Surprise of God to a world in need*.

I'll be grinning behind my mask when I see you on November 8!

With great love,



Matt Anderson
Lead Pastor
Surprise Church Bismarck



Meat, Masks, & Spiritual Maturity A Biblical Case Study

In I Corinthians 8, Paul calls believers to act with concern for the weak in faith. He was concerned about the eating of meat that has been used for pagan worship rituals. Some Christians were eating this meat publicly because they knew it had no actual power, but young believers were greatly confused by this display. Paul affirms that Christians could in fact eat a "Zeus-burger" since it had no actual power, but they should not do so whenever it would cause the weak to stumble: *Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak* (I Cor 8:9).