

A Guide for Bridgetown Communities Meeting During Oregon Phase 1

With new cases of COVID-19 declining, we are so excited to begin making plans for Bridgetown Communities to meet in person once again. As Communities, you have been thoughtful, resilient, and faithful in this season, and we are deeply grateful for you.

While we will do our best to keep providing helpful recommendations for meeting, there are no perfect solutions. On this journey, you will quickly find yourselves in the realm of opinions, preferences, and personality—of which there are many. In doing so, it is okay and unlikely for everyone to be on the same page.

The guidelines and recommendations in this packet 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 Communities to reflect and maintain three distinct values: **Wisdom, Unity, and Embodied Presence.**

By valuing **Wisdom**, we make it our aim not only to protect the vulnerable, but to learn from and defer to doctors and governing authorities in this time, gaining insight and discernment wherever it may be found. (Proverbs 1v5, 19v20)

By valuing **Unity**, we agree with the writers of the New Testament who 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 4v1-6)

By valuing **Embodied presence**, we recognize that there is a lot of pain in isolation and that we deeply need in-person Community if we are going to become like Jesus and thrive individually and corporately. (Hebrews 10v24-25)

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Community Meeting Recommendations for Phase 1

Oregon is slowly but surely on its way to reopening. Governor Brown and State officials have proposed a multi-phased plan that we believe will provide helpful guidance for our church and our Communities. Phase 1 of the Governor's plan will provide a set of guidelines for reopening of restaurants, select businesses focused on self-care and health, and gatherings of 25.

So, what does this mean for Bridgetown Communities? Our recommendation is slightly slower than what is legally permissible, but we believe that doing so best reflects our values for Wisdom, Unity, and Embodied Presence in this time. Once Multnomah County is approved for Phase 1, our official recommendation for Bridgetown Communities during Phase 1 is to broaden their weekly expression of Community into **three recommended forms:**

- 1. Whole Communities Outside:** This involves the entire Community meeting in person and outdoors, while everyone practices social distancing and wears masks when distancing cannot be maintained.
- 2. Smaller Groups Outside or Inside:** This involves the Community meeting in person in smaller groups of 3 – 5 (men's, women's, triads, etc.) outside or inside while social distancing and wearing masks when social distancing isn't possible. This could be either during the night your Community meets or on Sundays to participate in Bridgetown Online.
- 3. Virtual Meetings:** This involves continuing to utilize Zoom, Google Hangouts, and other similar platforms to meet.

These three forms are not meant to provide a neat and tidy rotation. Instead, we encourage Communities to utilize all three forms in differing measures so as to give space for varying preferences and needs within our Communities. It is unlikely that everyone in your Community will love all three of these forms — that's normal.

If you are a Community Leader, strive to navigate the middle ground, honoring preferences on both sides. This will mean that some weeks we should lead our Communities to gather in person, even if not everyone will join, while other weeks we should meet virtually, even if some dread it. This will likely require some flexibility on all of our parts, but we believe our Communities can do it!

Pastoral Guidelines for Community Leaders

As we have said before and is still so very true, Community Leaders are the frontline pastors of our church. Gathering together as Communities in the wake of COVID-19 will require intentional and thoughtful pastoral care. To that end, here are a few Pastoral Guidelines based upon our values of Wisdom, Unity, and Embodied Presence:

Wisdom

- **Stay informed.** Do your best to stay informed not only regarding what is going on in your Community, but also in our state and county. We will continue to provide updates via the Weekly and via Leaders' Meetings.
- **Observe media and news habits.** Be thoughtful about where you get your information from and your habits for media intake during this time.
- **Observe the Precautions.** As stated earlier, our recommendations do not solely come from what is *permissible* but what is *wise*. For this reason, we'd encourage your Community to observe precautions such as distancing, hand washing, face masks, etc. More details can be found in the Practical Guidelines below.
- **Recognize the emotional nature of the conversation.** It can be helpful to remember that this conversation can be very emotional in nature. There are likely those who are afraid to meet together and those who are afraid to stay isolated. Either way, using logic or new information will probably be unproductive and ineffective in conversation.

Unity

- **Facilitate conversation.** As a Community Leader, the goal is *not* for you to simply express your opinion about what your Community should do and then act accordingly, but to utilize the Community Discussion Guide and your own thoughtful questions to gain input before making a decision.
- **Make space for every voice.** If someone has not expressed their opinion or tends to be quiet, seek them out and ask them to share what they think. The loudest voice should not necessarily be the winning voice.

- **Balance the three Community forms.** If we are going to truly honor both sides, we will for a time have to embrace both in-person gatherings (whether with everyone or smaller groups) *and* virtual meetings. Do your best to keep the three forms laid out above in balance based on your Community’s feedback.
- **Practice laying aside preferences.** This is an exercise in laying aside our preferences. After discussing preferences with your Community, express together which you are willing to lay aside for the sake of meeting together.
- **Let Bridgetown Leadership be the “bad guy.”** Inevitably, someone in your Community will be upset that these precautions are too slow or not slow enough. If that is the case, you are welcome to let us be the “bad guy;” meaning that you can point to our recommendations as the basis for your decision making, not a bias one way or the other.
- **Avoid factions.** It is very easy for groups to devolve into two smaller groups: those for and those against meeting in person. These groups are reductionistic and can often lead to resentment. As far as it depends on you, avoid factions.

Embodied Presence

- **Communicate clearly and promptly.** There is plenty of ambiguity to go around right now. Do your best to clearly communicate meeting plans for the week ahead of time, ideally sooner than you normally would. This will promote trust and clarity within your Community.
- **Don’t put Community on pause.** Many of us are pretty burnt out right now, which is completely understandable. We encourage you to keep gathering, even if the gatherings are short, distanced, or virtual. Maintaining connection will continue to be important in this time.
- **Meet in person.** We are encouraging incremental moves towards in-person gatherings because embodied presence is *important*. Even if it's slow and there are limits, we encourage you to begin meeting together in person as you can.

Practical Guidelines for Each Community

At the end of the day, the medical professionals tell us that there is no such thing as a zero-risk outing right now. That will not be true forever, but it is for now. With that in mind (and pursuing our values of Wisdom, Unity, and Embodied Presence), what follows are some practical guidelines that we strongly encourage each Community to follow.

Safety Precautions: Many health professionals are talking about risk and safety through the lens of “time, space, people, place” —risk increases the longer we are with a group of people, the smaller the space between us is, the more the number of people increases, and when groups meet indoors. With that, here are some basic precautions we recommend that each Community implements:

- **Meet Outside when possible.** In following with the guidance of medical professionals, we recommend that for the time being whole Communities only meet in-person if they can be outside.
- **Keep social distancing.** Please do your part to keep a conscious 6 feet of distance from those of other households.
- **Wear masks when distancing is not possible.** Health officials are recommending that individuals wear a mask when social distancing is not possible. If members of your Community are not able to maintain 6 feet of distance in the place you are meeting, we would recommend wearing a mask for the sake of protecting others.
- **Wash hands and sanitize surfaces.** Remember to have each person wash their hands before and after coming together. Since the virus can last on surfaces, it is also important to clean and sanitize spaces in which people will be and have been.
- **Bring your own food.** If the Community is going to eat together (including your Communion elements), we recommend that each person brings their own food and utensils.
- **No pets.** We *love* our pets in Portland, but like children, they aren’t great at social distancing and can carry COVID-19. Because of this, we recommend that

pet owners either leave their pets at home or keep them on a tight leash, being sure to not let them interact with anyone.

Children: To no fault of their own children are not great at social distancing. Because of this, caution needs to be taken when it comes to figuring out how best to include them. Each Community needs to come to their own decisions, but here are some best practices:

- **Carriers** – For young children, the best option is to keep them on your person using some kind of carrier.
- **Pack and Play** – For younger children, another option is to have each household use a pack and play of some kind to keep them socially distanced from other children and adults.
- **Blanket System** – For older children (3–10 years old) who are able to stay put, an option is to set out a blanket that is socially distanced from other kids and adults and have the child stay on the blanket.
- **Rotating Parents & Sitters** – For two-parent households, the safest option is to rotate which parent goes to Community and which stays at home with the child. For single-parent households, it may be wise to rotate babysitting amongst Community members. We know that missing a Community night is not ideal, but for everyone’s safety it may be the best option for the time being.

Those Who Are Sick or Unwell – If anyone is not feeling well or showing any symptoms of being sick, we highly suggest that they stay home. It is not about whether or not they feel up for meeting; it’s about not exposing others to any form of sickness.

Elderly, Immunocompromised, & People Who Have Contact With Those

Populations: The most at risk groups are the elderly and the immunocompromised. For a season, we would recommend that they and those who have contact with them choose *not* to join in-person gatherings for a time and then, when they do, that your Community practice dedicated adherence to the above guidelines.

Individual Reflection Questions & Exercises

Before coming together as a Community to discuss gathering in person, work through the following questions and exercises:

1. With regard to this conversation, list the following in order of greatest to least personal value to you:

- Group Consensus & Unity
- Relationships & Connection
- Public Safety
- Personal Health
- Personal Freedom (Not constitutionally, but in terms of one’s ability to go places and do things as one normally would or as one would like)
- Following Rules & Obeying Authority
- Stability
- Deference to others
- Protecting immunocompromised / elderly

2. Work through the following scenarios, marking an X along each row to indicate your answer to the questions: What is my *preference*? What am I *willing* to do? What am I *not willing* to do?

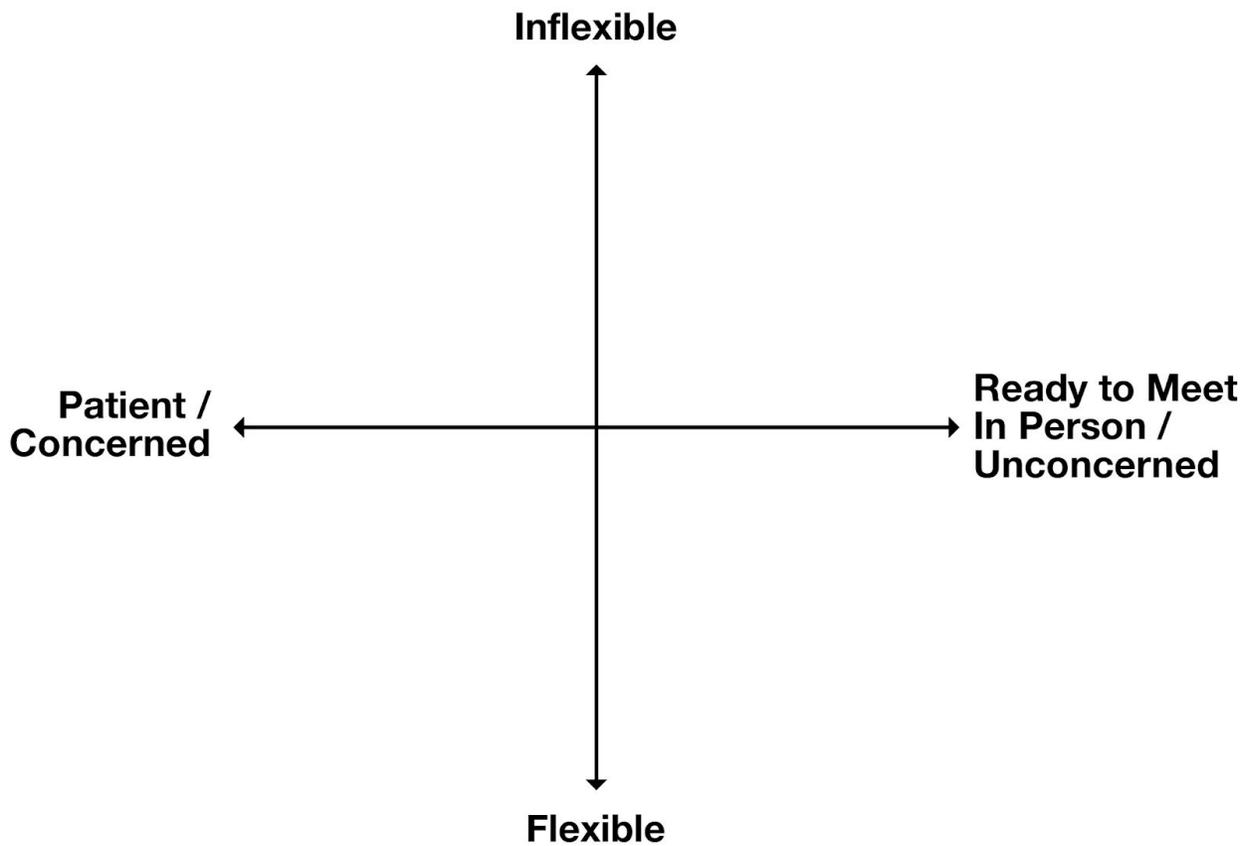
Preference	Willing	Unwilling	
			Meeting virtually (via Zoom, Google Hangout, etc.)
			Wearing a mask to indoor or outdoor meetings with 6 ft of distance
			Wearing a mask to indoor or outdoor meetings where distancing is not maintained
			Meeting outdoors with up to 3 – 5 people (social distancing)
			Meeting indoors with up to 3 – 5 people (social distancing)
			Meeting outdoors with up to 10 people (social distancing)

			Meeting indoors with up to 10 people (social distancing)
			Meeting outdoors without social distancing
			Meeting indoors without social distancing

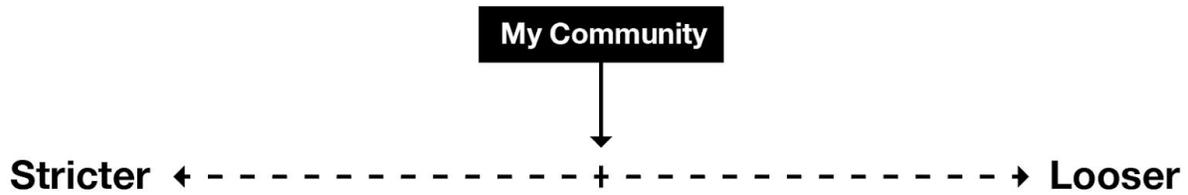
Summarize the chart above by filling in the blanks below :

- My preference is _____.
- I am willing to _____.
- I am unwilling to _____.

3. Regarding your level of concern and your flexibility in your practices, place yourself on the chart below and then reflect on the following questions.



Regarding your strictness with social distancing, masks, and other precautions, plot yourself in relationship to your Community on the following chart:



After plotting yourself, reflect on the following questions in a journal or in your mind:

If you are patient or concerned:

- Where might my boundary be built around fear?
- Believing the best about everyone in your Community and putting yourself in their shoes, why might others have looser boundaries than you?

If you are ready to meet or unconcerned:

- Where might my lack of boundaries be about mitigating my own discomfort?
- Believing the best about everyone in your Community and putting yourself in their shoes, why might others have stricter boundaries than you?

4. Work through the following questions regarding your Community:

Does my Community include any of the following demographics:

- Elderly
- Immunocompromised
- Children
- Single people who live alone

What might each of these people need/want from me during this time?

Why might someone have a different conviction than me?

A Community Discussion Guide

Having completed the Individual Reflection Questions & Exercises on your own, work through the following discussion questions as a Community. In doing so, make it your aim to make sure every voice is heard and valued.

1. In the first exercise, what did you list as your top three values?
2. Work through the second exercise together, sharing what each of you prefer, are willing to do, and are unwilling to do.
3. How do you feel about wearing a mask? Would you prefer if our Community wore masks when together outdoors? What about indoors?
4. Where did you plot yourself on the two graphs?
5. What is one thing you want our Community to know about you, your thoughts, and your feelings right now?
6. How would you summarize what you are hearing from our Community?

To end your time, plan to spend a week memorizing Ephesians 4v1-6 as a Community.