

COMMITTEE ON RETURN AND RENEWAL

Job Description

Background: The nature of the current public health crisis poses significant barriers to returning to worship at Westminster as we knew it in February. Nearly every aspect of our Sunday worship experience is challenged by public health guidelines intended to reduce transmission of the COVID-19 virus, such as:

- Gathering for worship and Christian education in groups larger than 10 people in relatively close quarters;
- Handling of common items and touching surfaces such as door handles, pew Bibles, hymnals, communion dishes, offering plates;
- Performance of choral music and hymn singing; and
- Operation of restrooms, kitchens, and other common areas.

The timing and manner of a return to Sunday worship in the sanctuary therefore needs to be considered carefully and deliberately, based on the best available information and guidance from medical professionals, government agencies and others, and in a public health environment that continues to evolve.

When the people of Israel “returned” to the land after the exile, they renewed the covenant and shaped their worship and service to God in ways that were different than before, but reimagined and reborn. (Nehemiah 8-10) The proposed committee has been intentionally named “Return and Renewal” (as opposed to “Re-open”) out of recognition of the tremendous degree to which the ministry of Westminster has remained open – much of it digitally – through this time of pandemic, and out of acknowledgment that when we are able to return to the facilities, many of our ministries will have changed or need to be changed.

Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to monitor and assess relevant information and recommend to the Session plans for a gradual or complete return *to* the facilities of Westminster, as well as the resumption of ministries and programs that occur *beyond* our facilities. In addition to recommending long-term plans, the committee may need to receive and advise the Session on shorter-term, specific requests as they arise.

Membership: To be appointed by the Session upon recommendation of the Pastor/Head of Staff.

The committee will have at least a Chair and Vice-Chair, whom the Pastor will recruit. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be responsible for all administrative duties related to the functioning of the committee including, but not limited to, noticing meetings, establishing the agenda, and producing minutes and appropriate records of deliberations.

The Pastor/Head of Staff will be the primary staff for the committee.

Task List:

- To *monitor and assess information and guidelines* from all relevant sources, including but not limited to
 - Governmental agencies
 - Medical agencies and professionals
 - Presbyterian, General Assembly and other ecclesiastical entities
 - University and school systems
 - Legal experts
 - Relevant international organizations
 - Cleaning and sanitization experts
 - Professionals from other fields which have some bearing on the feasibility, timing, and degree of resuming activities *in* the building and in some instances *away* from the building

- To be aware of and consider such information in light of *the programmatic traditions and plans of the ministries* and services that occur *in* the building or *away* from the building, including
 - Ministries of Westminster that occur *directly* under the authority of the Session in worship and music, Christian Formation, mission, and congregational life
 - Ministries chartered or “owned” by Westminster whose operations occur *less directly* under the Session (Westminster Weekday Pre-School, Scout Troops chartered by Westminster, the craft ministry)
 - Ministries and activities that use Westminster facilities (Twelve-step groups, scout meetings of troops other than those chartered by Westminster, community groups)
 - Administrative, staff, and volunteer support for all ministries.

- To *make recommendations to the Session* short-term and long term, on issues such as:
 - Under what conditions we can safely return to worship in the sanctuary, and what protocols would need to be followed in each aspect of worship, such as
 - Use of paper bulletins, pew hymnals and Bibles
 - Choral music and hymn singing
 - Baptisms
 - Communion
 - Children’s’ Sermon
 - Funerals and weddings
 - Plate Offerings

 - Under what circumstances can we safely resume non-worship related activities in the church building and what protocols will apply?
 - Fellowship Hour
 - Sunday morning Childcare
 - Christian Education and Youth programs
 - Westminster Pre-School
 - Scouts and other community groups
 - Funeral receptions

- What personal protection, cleaning, and sanitizing protocols should be followed within church facilities?
- What aspects of Westminster's longer-term ministry and programs are likely to change as a result of this experience, and what potential re-balancing of staff, volunteers, and financial resources might be required?
- To receive requests for *interpretation* from specific groups or ministries; and to assess and make recommendation to the Session *requests for exceptions* to approved policies or schedules.

Coordination: At all levels of the committee's work, it will *coordinate and work with* existing committees and boards of Westminster

Reporting and Duration: The committee shall report to the Session by the end of July with recommendations for the beginning of church year in September 2020. It shall report recommendations thereafter as circumstances require, and remain in place until the completion of its work and resolution of all matters pertaining to its charge, but no longer than May 31, 2021.

Approved by Session

5-27-20