

“NEW BEGINNINGS CHURCH – ADAPTING CHURCH SERVICES AMID COVID-19” (May 28, 2020)



New Beginnings Church Congregation – January 2017

In early March 2020, the church began to be more aware of the Covid-19 pandemic...Beginning on March 8, 2020, the members of the congregation “bumped elbows” as a way of greeting each other during the morning service. This took the place of hugs or hand shaking during the normal greeting period at the beginning of the Sunday AM services. In addition, there was a hand sanitizer station near the front door to the church. On the next Sunday AM service (March 15, 2020), we continued the “elbow bumping” greeting, but the Sunday evening services were cancelled. Normally, on Sunday evening there is a potluck dinner after the service and people were not too sure about eating together. In the middle of that week, all church services were cancelled until further notice, including the Wednesday evening service on March 18. The members were notified by phone calls and/or text messages.

The church services were held live on Facebook from that point on at 11:00 AM on Sunday mornings. Our church (the Pastor, his wife, and the technical support person) had to learn a few things about the limits of Facebook as they went. Their first problem was that although they purchase the rights to play certain music in the church during services, Facebook does not allow them to play these songs on live video. So, the music had to be from a hymnal and the Pastor’s wife sang the song with background music (no lyrics). Another thing that they learned was that Facebook videos are limited to 1 hour only. This shortened the typical service by about 10 to 15 minutes.

In addition to the normal service, there was a live video Children’s Church that was shown at 10:00 AM on Facebook. And there was a youth service for teenagers at 6:00 PM on and an adult service at 7:00 PM on Wednesday evenings.

Although the Governor of Oklahoma allowed church services to begin again in early May 2020, New Beginnings Church chose to continue their Facebook services until May 24, 2020. In addition, their services were split up into two different services at two different locations to help protect the elderly members and those with compromised health conditions such as cancer or other problems. The elderly and those with compromised health problems held their service at 9:30 AM at the Tabler Gospel Tabernacle, located approximately 1 mile west of the church at the Naples site. New Beginnings Church began a "joint fellowship" arrangement with the Tabler Church in October 2017. There are no children's church services at the 9:30 AM meeting. All of those attending the early service are asked to wear masks and there is hand sanitizer readily available. Every other pew is blocked off so that it is not used to help maintain safe distancing. Social distancing greetings include "virtual" fist bumps (no touching) and just speaking to one another.

The other members and their children have church service at the Naples site at the normal time of 11:00 AM. It is not required to wear masks at this service, although the pastor, his wife, and a few others wear masks. The second service is essentially a duplicate service of the earlier one with the same pastor. The children have "Children's Church" as they normally do with some distance spacing of the chairs in the classrooms.

These services will continue in this manner until the congregation feels comfortable rejoining the two groups. It is not anticipated to change back to somewhat normal until sometime in June 2020 at the earliest.

Photo courtesy of "New Beginnings Church – Blanchard" Facebook Site:

<https://www.facebook.com/Newbeginningsblanchard/>

Photo Posted January 29, 2017

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