Beloved Community Church, UCC Community Health COVID-19 Policy - March 2020

The diversity central to life at Beloved Community Church, UCC means that a fair number of people in our active congregation are physically, emotionally, or economically vulnerable (or some combination of the three).

We host two other congregations who meet weekly on Sundays in our building. We also engage with and host a range of community partners who represent especially vulnerable groups of people.

For this reason, we seek to be proactive and adaptive around the ongoing spread of COVID-19 and to establish a policy that, with revisions as appropriate, will be helpful going forward should other mass health concerns arise.

This policy was drafted by Coordinating Pastor Rev. Jennifer Sanders (03/07/20), reviewed and discussed by Beloved’s ad hoc Community Health Ministry Team (03/08/20), and submitted to the congregation.

It is envisioned as a series of cumulative proactive steps and calm and sensible responses to rapidly evolving situations in which there is both perception of threat and actual threat of serious illness or death.

**Stage 0 - no active threat in the region**

- Provide access to hand sanitizer and restrooms with hand soap.
- Maintain basic hygiene and order of the premises and ask those using the facility to do the same.
- Encourage people who are not feeling well to refrain from participation in group activities.
- Advocate for just and equitable access to healthcare for all people, as well as environmental policies that protect the well-being of ecosystems.
- Pray for the health and well-being of all who are sick, including but not limited to those in the active congregation. Pray for those whose livelihood and financial stability is affected by illness or societal change.
- Provide pastoral and congregational care as appropriate and able for those in the congregation and wider Beloved community who need support during their own illness or the illness of a family member.
- Ensure that individuals can safeguard their own health, well-being, and bodily integrity by waving, fist-bumping, elbow-bumping, or abstaining from physical gestures or touch without stigma during community greeting times.

**Stage 1**

no confirmed cases in Alabama, but active cases of highly contagious infectious disease in region

- Continue with measures from Stage 0.
- Pack away toys normally provided for the free play of small children & request that parents bring their own silent activities for children during worship or meetings.
- Provide Holy Communion in sealed individual servings (will begin 03/15/20).
- Offer snacks in sealed individual serving sizes (will begin no later than 03/15/20).
- Provide hygiene kits (with hand sanitizer, soap, water bottle, etc) to our homeless members and friends (Congregational Care to begin working on this on 3/8/20).
- Encourage non-participation in group gatherings if a runny nose or cough is present.
● Lovingly recommend all persons follow non-contact greeting protocols during community greeting times (will begin 03/08/20).

● Provide disinfectant supplies in each bathroom and common area.

● Participate in local grassroots organizing, denominational resources, and government information and initiatives around disease prevention and mitigation. An especially useful resource - https://transformativespaces.org/2020/03/04/demands-from-grassroots-organizers-concerning-covid-19/

● Assess capacity of Congregational Care Ministry Team to provide assistance to low-resource members on an as needed basis - and develop plans for response based on that capacity.

● Notify coordinators of outside meetings at the church of these policies and procedures and make plans for follow-up should stage change.

● Request that financially stable people who support the church financially enroll in online giving to ensure that basic necessary bills can be covered even if in-person attendance is not possible.

● Request that those involved with the congregations of Beloved, Firm Foundation, or Magic City Spiritual Community notify their pastors if they or their family members are diagnosed or quarantined through COVID-19 exposure.

● Offer educational tools to the congregation to help ensure that people have good information, including -
  ○ https://www.birminghamal.gov/coronavirus
  ○ https://www.uab.edu/news/coronavirus

Stage 2 - confirmed cases in Alabama

● Continue with measures from Stages 0 & 1.

● Cease serving food for consumption at the church, other than the individually packaged Communion elements during scheduled worship.

● Community Hour conversations and Ministry Team meetings continue.

● People may bring their own drinks or snacks to consume in the building. Distribution of non-perishables through Brown Box and to homeless neighbors continues.

● Rather than passing the offering baskets, one basket will be placed at the back of the room by the sound board and one in the front on or by the altar. People will be invited to place their offerings in the basket as they arrive or leave. Offering counters will have use of disposable gloves to wear while counting the offering and preparing the deposit.

● In place of the visitor information clipboards, visitor information will be entered directly into Breeze.

● Instead of passing the microphone during prayer time, the pastor (at the mic) will repeat the prayers spoken by each person to ensure that everyone can hear.
● Any planned off-site official activities are postponed (except for Brown Box pick-up and Family Promise - we will follow their protocols for these matters).

● Ensure that all groups meeting in the building at Beloved (including the other 2 churches) are adhering to these protocols and notifying Rev. Jennifer if there are confirmed cases among their congregants/participants.

● Meeting coordinators for each gathering (Beloved or community) will be instructed to use provided disinfectant supplies in each bathroom and common area to wipe down around faucet handles and doorknobs after each meeting/worship service - or to designate a trusted participant to handle those tasks.

● Increase frequency of routine disinfecting of common areas.

● Disposable gloves will be made available in the bathrooms and common areas.

● Ensure that pastors of all 3 congregations are in communication about COVID-19 related topics, including sharing news of confirmed cases in the congregation or the congregation’s extended community.

Stage 3 - widespread cases in Alabama and/or confirmed cases among people connected to Beloved, Firm Foundation, or Magic City Spiritual Community who have NOT been present at the church since the beginning of local outbreak - in the absence of directives from external agencies (denominational or governmental)

● Continue with measures from prior stages with the following revisions:

● All scheduled activities other than weekly Morning Prayer and Communion and Evening Worship postponed. Musicians and security guards have the option of opting out of participation in Evening Worship, though they will not be paid if they are not present.

● Postponing of outside meetings at the church, other than Sunday worship by Firm Foundation and Magic City Spiritual Community.

● Congregational Care Ministry Team adopts a non-contact protocol for support provided for anyone within the congregation.

● Hymn lyrics will be placed in the bulletin.

● Continue already-planned Monday Evening Prayer Zoom call worship opportunity (already scheduled to begin as an additional Lenten worship opportunity on 3/16/20).

● Children’s activities restricted to reading or other activities that do not involve sharing of art or other supplies.

Stage 4 - formal call for restriction on activities or quarantine by denominational or governmental officials - or confirmed cases by people actively involved in congregational life at Beloved, Firm Foundation, or Magic City Spiritual Community

● Continue with measures from prior stages with the following revisions:

● Cancellation of all activities in the Beloved building (activities in the Brown Memorial Building are subject at all times to the policies of The Abbey and the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama).

● Expand opportunities for digital worship, study, and social connection through Zoom and other online media.