

TO: SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FM: Pastor Bill Buchholz, Family Community Church

RE: SCC, June 8, 2020 Special Meeting Agenda Item 3 (a) Panel discussion relating to recommendations regarding the safe operation of faith-based institutions and delivery of services.

Family Community Church is a congregation of 5,000+ with a huge 17-acre, 128,640 SF campus and nearly 1,000 parking spaces.

FCC's campus has 7 auditoriums in 2 different buildings (2 separate addresses, 474 & 478 Piercy Road, San Jose, CA)

Churches should have always been considered "essential" operations. The role that faith plays in maintaining spiritual, emotional, and physical health are not adequately met by online venues. Not everybody that would otherwise attend church services has a computer or smartphone. Stopping churches from assembling deprives citizens of constitutional rights of assembly and worship.

Current Santa Clara County guidelines to "reopen" churches that only allow 25 to gather outside are unsafe (100 degree temps in June and July), causing possible heat stroke to attendees.

State guidelines in place now allow 25% capacity or 100 persons meeting indoors. With proper planning those guidelines are reasonable and should be started immediately in Santa Clara County.

FCC has a great template for reopening, as follows:

1. Notify congregation by email and social media to attend only if not ill or no temperature.
2. Registration to attend church to limit how many people show up for service.
3. Encourage elderly and parents with children to not attend on campus and view services online at this time.
4. Use one entrance where attendees are greeted by staff trained to ensure masks are worn.
5. We have on hand 5,000 masks, so anyone that needs one will get one.
6. We have on hand 12 gallons of hand sanitizer and 12 commercial dispensers for our campus.
7. We have trained our staff in protocols of Covid-19 risk mitigation per SCC and CDC guidelines.

8. We have 50 CDC posters (11X17) with Covid-19 instructions available to post throughout the campus.
9. Our 1,400-seat auditorium and other auditoriums are large, which allow for our worship teams to spread out and “social distance” quite well on stage. 100 people in those auditoriums would have way less than 10% occupancy if State guidelines are implemented (instead of 25 people outside in the sun).
10. FCC has state of the art green technology HVAC systems that allow us to adjust air flow in all air handlers so that maximum 100% exterior air can be supplied to our campus, rather than recirculating air in assembly areas. This creates way more fresh air than opening windows or doors.... It’s the next best thing to being outdoors.
11. FCC has been in constant communication with Supervisor Cortese about reopening, sharing our plans and offering to be a resource to help our County provide directions to all churches to reopen with proper risk mitigation measures in place. We want to be compliant, but we also know we can reopen now, with indoor services being conducted without raising substantial risk of virus spread because of our extensive preparations and training of our staff and volunteers. Please let us help reopen churches safely!
12. FCC knows the extended Shelter In Place order that is approaching 100 days, has been detrimental to public health. Resulting issues we are addressing with our people include depression, economic harm, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, and spousal abuse.
13. FCC does not want anyone to get sick because they came to church. FCC also believes we can be a “test case reopening church”, a guinea pig, to reopen on-campus meetings immediately, per California guidelines, monitoring our congregation that attends, and reporting any positive Covid-19 episodes. If, after 3 weeks, no episodes have surfaced and our reopening strategy and mitigation measures are successful as anticipated, FCC’s plans can be implemented county-wide for other churches to follow. This idea was floated June 3, 2020 by Supervisor Dave Cortese in a Zoom conference call with Pastor Bill Buchholz and Deputy County Counsel Tony LoPresti.

Respectfully,

Bill Buchholz
Senior Pastor
Family Community Church