

May 18, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For the past nine weeks and ten Sundays, we have not gathered corporately for public worship on the Lord's Day. The assembling together of the saints is a precious right and responsibility, a delight and a duty, that we have foregone for a season to protect the lives of the most vulnerable and to assist our healthcare system in caring for the sick. To help flatten the curve of the virus ordained by God's sovereign will, the Session voted only to livestream our morning and evening services beginning on March 15. How thankful I have been for the technology and the skilled technicians that have broadcasted the worship of God to you who suddenly had become temporary shut-ins! Yet I trust that your soul, though fed by God's word sung, prayed, read, and preached over the internet, has "longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord" (Psalm 84:2; see also Psalm 27:4; 42:1-4; 122:1).

As our state and local communities begin to reopen for business, the Session has voted to plan to return to gathered corporate worship on Sunday, May 31, in a phased and careful manner. We recognize that many of you are not ready to return to larger public gatherings yet. Indeed, if you are sick or are at high risk of suffering greatly if you catch this virus due to age or underlying health conditions, we strongly encourage you to stay at home. We will continue to livestream our services as we have been doing. But for those of you who are willing and able (physically and in good conscience) to gather together with the saints, I want to let you know what to expect in Phase One of our return to gathered corporate worship.

- We will have a single morning worship service at 10:00 a.m.
- Like area restaurants, we will use up to 50% capacity in our sanctuary and up to 50% capacity in our gym (our live stream will be shown in the gym on the screens), following distancing guidelines in our seating. In the sanctuary, we will skip every other row and ask you to have at least three empty chairs between family units.
- Seating in the sanctuary will be on a first come basis, so arrive early if you would like to worship in the sanctuary. Once the ushers deem that the available seating has been utilized, worshippers will be directed to the gym.
- At the end of the service, the ushers will formally dismiss the congregation outside in a row-by-row fashion, from back to front, to avoid gatherings in the aisles and foyer.
- The sanctuary will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before the morning worship service. Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrances, and we also encourage you to bring your own. Doors will be opened by ushers or propped open, to avoid multiple contacts with door handles.
- Masks are welcome if you would like to wear one, though at this point we are not requiring them.

- All Bibles, hymnals, and visitor pads have been removed from the chairs. We encourage you to bring your own Bibles to worship. The words to our songs will continue to be printed in the bulletins. We do plan to sing congregationally at this point, and will continue to assess the possible risks of this delightful duty.
- We will not take up an offering during the service but will have designated spots in the foyer for you to place your tithes and other financial gifts to the church. You can also give online (www.pearorchard.org/ways-to-give).
- There will be no Lord's Supper, no Choir, no Church Time, and no Sunday School yet.
- There will be a Nursery for the families who desire to make use of it.
 - Registration is recommended. A registration form will be emailed to nursery families.
 - Parent drop-off and pick-up will be outside of the nursery building, and no one may enter the building except for paid nursery workers and approved volunteers.
 - Upon arrival the child's temperature will be checked and a visual screening will be made to assure that there is no visible sign of illness (runny nose, cough, flushed cheeks, etc). Children with temperature of 100.4 or above will not be allowed inside the building as recommended by the CDC. Children with a visible runny nose (clear or otherwise) or with a cough will not be allowed inside the building
 - No car seats/infant carriers or strollers will be allowed inside the nursery building
- The Education Building and the doors at the back of the Sanctuary will be locked.
- Evening worship will continue only to be live streamed at 6:00 p.m.

As of May 18, the tri-county metro Jackson area has seen 1,602 cases and 45 deaths from COVID-19 since March 11. We recognize that this virus could increase in intensity, and that as testing increases, case numbers may increase. We will continue to monitor the health situation, and if we determine that we need to postpone our plan to reopen we will let you know.

Ultimately, we are trusting that you who come to worship will use common sense precautions, will assess the risks and take responsibility for yourself and your family, and will respect the people around you. Not everyone who attends will have the same degree of comfort in terms of greetings, distancing, etc. Let us love our neighbors, refusing to judge or disdain one another, but seeking the good of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and of those who are outside of Christ (Romans 14:1, 3; 15:2). Be praying that the Lord would keep us physically safe as we gather, and that this pandemic will in God's timing be the opportunity for many unbelievers and visitors to come to worship to meet with the living God and with His people. Pray for the preaching of the word, and for all who participate in making the worship service happen. Pray that God would be glorified as we gather together again, and that He would remove this virus so that the whole body might be free to meet for worship again.

In the King's Service,

Caleb Cangelosi