



AS WE REGATHER ON JUNE 7TH

There are several foundational issues to remember:

Our Greatest Desire is the Lord's Will. From our human perspective, it seems life is returning to some sense of normalcy, and we should just jump right back into public gatherings. But Proverbs 16:9 says, "*The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*" We are finite beings unable to see and understand all the Lord knows. Therefore, we want to follow God's timing and allow Him to direct our steps. Our staff has prayed, discussed, and sought counsel from members and others and we believe the Lord has lead us to regather on June 7th. However, we will continue social distancing and offering online services for those who are not ready to return and those in high risk categories. But in all things, we will seek His will.

Safety. We want to be safe and compassionate. From all medical indications, COVID-19 is highly contagious and specifically difficult on more susceptible segments of the population and our church family. Our goal is to follow the Lord's will and, at the same time, provide the safest return plan possible for all our members and guests.

Differing Perspectives. Because we are unique beings who look at all matters differently, we realize not everyone is at the same place on our return. And it's okay that we disagree, but it's not okay that we be disagreeable. Considering that people have varying health conditions and are at different levels of emotional comfort, it's natural that not everyone would agree.

The Principle of Love. Since we may very well be at differing places about our return, we must remember Jesus' command in John 15:12 to "*love one another,*" and as we saw John's command in 1 John 4 to "*love one another.*" The Apostle Paul gave us the guiding principle of love in 1 Corinthians 8-10. Paul explained that even though we may be comfortable with something, if that something causes my brother to stumble, I will deprive myself that something. So, when we disagree, show love rather than judgment!

Respect for Authority. In 1 Peter 2:13-15, Peter wrote, "*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right, you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.*" Our governing leaders at all levels have issued orders and made suggestions about public gatherings and social distancing. Until those orders clearly violate biblical teaching and Christian conscience, we will be diligent to show respect and deference to those ordained by God to govern our land. If, however, any government demands we violate God's Word, we must obey Good rather than Man! (Acts 5:29)

WHEN WILL WE RETURN TO NORMAL?

"Normal" is a relative word. We may never return to normal as we once knew it. Certainly, we will return to public gatherings for worship and Bible study, but how we do our ministry may look very different. For example, we are certain as we regather we will receive an offering, but we will not be passing offering plates (more about that below). There are other elements of our public gatherings that may never look the same. Remember, we must be flexible!

The more pressing word in the question "*When will we return to normal*" is probably the word "**when**." That is a great question and a great word! Because circumstances are changing almost daily, we will continue maintain social distancing suggestions of the six-feet distance between family units and be diligent about sanitizing our facility.

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO PREPARE OUR BUILDING FOR PUBLIC GATHERINGS?

During this downtime, we have focused on different projects that are more easily accomplished with an empty building. Before we regather for public gatherings, the facility will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. All door handles and knobs will be cleaned with a strong disinfectant. Hand sanitizing stations will be placed prolifically in strategic locations.

As we regather, we will sanitize the building between services and clean all bathrooms.

When you arrive at the building, you will notice all our volunteers and staff wearing masks, except for those on the platform singing or preaching. We encourage to wear a mask, but certainly not required.

You will also notice a wellness table in the foyer staffed by members of our church from the medical profession. If you aren't feeling well, or suspect you are running a fever, we encourage you to visit the table. Those staffing the table will have touchless thermometers and be happy to check your temperature.



WHAT WILL OUR WORSHIP SERVICES LOOK LIKE?

In many ways, there will be no changes. We will have music, pray, preach God's Word, and receive an offering.

- We will have two worship services at **8:30am** and **10:30am**. Doors will unlock no earlier than 8:00am and 10:00am.
- There will only be 2 entrances into the building. One will be on the **Daviess Street** side entrance behind the prayer garden. This is the entrance the majority of people will utilize. The other will be in the **back parking lot** going into the new reception area. NOTE: This entrance is reserved for those needing the elevator only.
- Everyone will be seated by ushers and dismissed by rows at the end of the worship service.
- Please don't expect to be in your normal seat.
- We will have worship only, no Sunday school, children's church, preschool, or nursery.
- We will eliminate printed bulletins, but there will be a digital bulletin.
- There will be no fellowship time before or during the service.
- We will not pass the offering plates, but will have offering boxes at the entrance/exit doors as you leave. We will continue to encourage online giving, mail in, and/or drop off at the church. Thank you for your consistent faithful giving over the years but especially during the shelter in place.
- Please no physical contact, such as shaking hands or hugging.
- Because of social distancing guidelines, we will not be utilizing a choir, but instead, will use a few vocalists and instrumentalists.
- Because of social distancing guidelines and the need to sanitize the building before the next service, we will encourage worshipers to exit the building as soon as possible.
- Because we will be eliminating some elements of the service and because children will be in our services, we will work diligently to keep service times to around 40-45 minutes



WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH ORDINANCES OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER?

We will continue with both but will modify how we do each. To maintain safe, sanitary practices, we will limit baptisms to one person per filling of the baptism. Our next Lord's Supper is scheduled for June 14th and we are planning on using prepackaged elements that worshipers will pick-up as they enter the worship center.

WHAT ABOUT SUNDAY SCHOOL?

Because of the social distancing guidelines, we will begin with worship only. We will continue to conduct Zoom Sunday school group meetings at the present time. There could possibly be some classes meeting during the week in our building while maintaining social distancing guidelines. That is yet to be determined.

WILL WE HAVE ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND CHILDREN UPON OUR RETURN TO "SUNDAY SERVICES"?

Sadly, no. But there is a tremendous upside to this; families will be worshiping together! We encourage families to embrace this time together. It can be a wonderful season to teach, model, and invest in your children as they learn to worship corporately and be a part of our church family. Kids will be kids, and that's okay. If your children aren't acting the way you think they should, don't worry, it won't bother us! And an added bonus is we will be very conscious about the length of the service.

Many of you have asked about Vacation Bible School. We have postponed it until we can gather in the building hopefully in August when school begins. Our plan is to do a weekend VBS with the curriculum "Concrete and Cranes." Think of it this way, when school starts, our Sunday Children's ministries start.



WHAT ABOUT OUR OLDER MEMBERS AND THOSE WITH "HIGH RISK" CONDITIONS?

EVEN YOUNGER PEOPLE WHO ARE CONCERNED WE ARE GATHERING TOO SOON OR HAVE BEEN ADVISED AGAINST DOING SO?

No worries! We will continue offering our services via all our online option and radio. The services are archived, so if you can't join us at a prescribed service time, you can go back later and watch the service. Also, do not feel guilty for not being in the service. The safety of our members is a foundational consideration. We desire to provide a gathering that promotes the physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness of all attenders. We understand if you feel more comfortable worshiping with us at home.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY “HIGH RISK”?

According to the CDC guidelines here are those individuals who are at “high risk”

We ask that if you are in the High Risk Group listed by the CDC, to please remain at home at this time. We love you and do not want you to risk being infected with this virus. The High-Risk group would include and not be limited to people:

- 65 yrs. and up
- with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- with serious heart conditions
- who are immunocompromised
- who are severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- with diabetes
- with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- with liver disease

WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL WELL, HAVE BEEN AROUND SOMEONE WHO IS SICK, OR HAVE A FEVER OR A COUGH?

Please stay home and worship with us online.



WHAT ABOUT WEDNESDAY NIGHTS?

Since much of our Wednesday night schedule is similar to a small group, we will not begin our regular Wednesday schedule until a later date.

HOW DO I STAY UP TO DATE WITH WHAT'S GOING ON AND ANY CHANGES THAT MIGHT TAKE PLACE?

Our website and social media pages are a great way to find the latest information. If you have not signed up for our weekly email "First Things" call the office and they will guide you to our website and how to sign-up. This is a great way to stay connected. Whether it is videos, one calls, or text-driven content, we will do our best to keep you up-to-date.

In closing, we know there are a ton of variables, and wish we could be more specific, like providing exact dates for when individual ministries will resume, but truthfully, no one really knows . . . no one except the Lord! So, we simply trust Him and press on. Trust me, we as a staff are ready to gather again without restrictions and ready to see all of you.

Lastley, thank you so much for your prayers ad your patience during this difficult time. We believe the best is yer to come. Remember what God told Habakkuk.

*"Look among the nations! Observe!
Be astonished! Wonder!
Because I am doing something in your days -
You would not beleive if you were told."*

I love you!

Paul Strahan | Senior Pastor

