



Friday, June 5, 2020

Dear Church,

As we have prayerfully considered the necessary steps we need to take for reopening our worship spaces, we want you to know that we have listened to the guidelines being provided by our local leaders, our denominational leaders, our district leadership, and medical professionals. We have also worked in collaboration as a church board and staff. We recognize that some might feel that there is more we should have done and others might feel that we are taking too many precautions. If you do not feel that you would be comfortable gathering to worship in person yet, we are investing in ways to make the live-streaming of our services the best possible option for you. If you feel that we are taking too many precautions, we ask for your patience and support as we all are navigating uncharted territory. Our desire is to show our love for each other by helping keep one another healthy and safe, both physically, but also mentally as we recognize the very real need for the support and encouragement of our church community during these days of isolation. Here is the list of protocols and guidelines we will be asking everyone to follow.

Live-streaming

- We will continue offering an online option for those needing or wishing to take additional precautions and remain at home. We will be shifting to live-streaming our complete services, including the sermon and time of worship.

Prior to leaving your home:

- If you are feeling ill in any way, we request that you join us for online worship from your home.
- We will be strongly requesting that everyone who comes into our worship spaces wear a facemask. For us, this is a matter of love and concern for others. Evidence continues to show that transmission of the Covid-19 virus occurs from person to person via air droplets, even from people who are not showing symptoms. Wearing a facemask during our initial phases of re-entry, while uncomfortable, is a way of telling everyone who comes into our worship spaces that we are watching out for them. So if you have a facemask of your own, please bring it to use at church. If you do not have one or forget it at home, we will have disposable masks available.

- If you need your morning coffee before service, keep in mind that we will not be serving food or beverages in the church yet. The water fountains will not be available either.
- Ok... this one feels like the strangest request that we need to make, but please use the restroom at your house before leaving for church. We are requesting that the use of the restrooms at church be kept to emergency use only. This is to keep areas that would need to be wiped down and disinfected by our cleaning staff to a minimum and also minimize any potential for surface transmission.

Additional Sunday Ministries:

- We will not be resuming Sunday School classes just yet. As we are adjusting to the various guidelines, we want to minimize the number of interactions within the church buildings.
- We will not be providing nursery or children's church options just yet. There really is no way to enforce physical distancing with our youngest worshipers in those settings. We will be providing activity bags and incorporating new ways for our children to engage in the worship service. The activity bags will be prepared with the appropriate precautions.
- We will be resuming Sunday evening youth group gatherings, but they will primarily be held outside in the back parking lot of the Family Life Center. Separate details will be provided to youth and parents of youth, but physical distancing protocols will be observed.

Pre- and Post-service Fellowship:

- We request that all extended conversations take place outside on the sidewalk or in the parking lot prior to entering or after leaving the church buildings. Even then, we request that you honor the physical distancing guidelines and remain 6 ft. apart from those outside your household.
- We also request that you refrain from shaking hands, hugging, or greeting each other with a kiss on the cheek.

Inside the Church Buildings:

- According to current city guidelines, gatherings of 50 percent of building occupancy may resume, so our ushers will be counting people as we come into the buildings to make sure we don't exceed that limit.
- Please keep the 6 ft. spacing guidelines in mind when entering and moving about inside the church buildings.
- We will keep the doors propped open during the times of entry and exit to minimize people needing to touch door handles. If the doors are not open and an usher is not there at that moment to open the door for you, please use the provided hand sanitizer prior to opening the doors.
- Hand sanitizer and a face mask will be provided for your use as you enter the buildings.
- Certain rows will be marked off or removed in the sanctuary and Family Life Center to assist with the 6 ft. physical distancing guidelines, but you will also need to leave spaces

within a row. Please keep 4 chairs between yourself and others who are not a part of your household.

- The worship team will begin playing worship music 5-10 minutes prior to the service, both to help with the live-streaming connection of those joining us online and to provide something to engage with since we are requesting that extended conversations only happen outside. Despite the logistical reasons, we truly trust that this will also be a meaningful way for us to prepare our hearts for worship even when we are gathering in a different way.
- Boxes will be provided for tithes and offering to be dropped off upon entering or leaving the church buildings. However, we do request that those who can please continue with the online giving option to reduce the need for our counters to process much cash.
- As mentioned above, the restrooms will be available, but for emergency use only. Disinfectant wipes will be provided for you to wipe down any surfaces you touch, including a place for you to dispose of a disinfectant wipe outside of the restrooms so you can wipe down the door handles as well.

Exiting the Church Buildings:

- At the end of the service, we will continue playing the worship music and dismiss people by rows, to avoid everyone ending up at the doors at the same time.
- On your way out of the buildings, there will be a place for you to dispose of your face mask and to again sanitize your hands.

That is all! Please remember that this is a working plan and we will be making adjustments as we go along. You have been so gracious and patient with us so far, and it is our hope that we might continue forward with the same spirit of cooperation and love for one another. Please continue to be in prayer with us too, for wisdom in making decisions to keep everyone safe and still connected, but more than that, for the Holy Spirit to enable us to be a true expression of Christ's love and hope.

In Christ,
New Hope Church Board and Staff

Church Board

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