

*If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... (Philippians 2:1-5)*

It's been a joy to be able to continue worship, Bible study and other aspects of ministry even in a time when we are restricted from gathering in person. Sometimes it feels like a miracle! We miss you! We miss seeing your faces in the congregation; gathering in the courtyard after services; having you drop by the office; visiting with you over coffee, a meal, or in your home. Social distancing is getting old and we, like you, are eager to see our church family again in person.

However, as restrictions are being lifted and our community begins opening up, Paul's words to the church at Philippi are important for us to hear. *"Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."* As much as we miss our church family and all the familiar ways we worship together, we realize it's not just about us. There are many members of our church that are vulnerable because of age or health issues. Though we may not be fearful, others are for very good reasons. Cleaning and disinfecting, wearing masks, and practicing good social distancing are all a part of our new normal; it's just as true within the church as it is anywhere else.

The Session in April authorized a task force to prepare guidelines for reopening. Members of that task force included Susan Abbott, Trey Byars, Greg Patton, and your pastors. The task force researched and prayerfully prepared a three stage process which was adopted by the Session in May to guide our efforts as we move forward together.

We are currently in Stage 1: only virtual worship and meetings as the church campus is closed and staff work remotely. The Session will discern when stage 2 will begin, with serious consideration being given to local ordinances supporting groups of 100 people or more to meet indoors. Two services will be offered, and one will continue to be shared online.

Worship will look different because of proper social distancing measures, including the wearing of face masks, no singing or choir, no communion, and no nursery. All meetings will be limited to 15 people in the Session room with all other offerings being online. The final stage will occur after local restrictions around gatherings have been lifted, which may include the continuation of some social distancing practices.

The guidelines are available [here](#). We encourage you to read through them carefully and invite you to ask us any questions you may have. For some of you this will seem too much. We ask that you remember in love your fellow church members who share your pew each Sunday who may have some need of which you are unaware. Please also remember your staff who have family members at home to care for as well. Remember too those who live alone and desperately need community but who do not want to get sick. Yes, some could stay at home in order for others to attend, but all deserve to participate in this community of faith as a beloved child of God. Too many people have died during this pandemic. Being patient, wearing masks when in public, and continuing to social distance could prevent others from illness and death. As the Apostle says, this is a time to think not only of our own interests but to think about the interests of others.

We look forward to being together again and to welcoming our new pastor in God's time. Hopefully, it will be sooner rather than later, but if later is necessary for the health and safety of our church family, then we hope God grants all of us the patience and compassion to graciously wait as long as needed. Until that time comes, we look forward to glorifying our Lord with you through worship on Facebook Live every Sunday morning at 10:30 am.

In Christ Alone,

Ann and David