



681 Monterey-Salinas Hwy  
Salinas, CA 93908

October 27, 2020

Dear Dr. Moreno,

Desiring to be upfront and transparent, I'm writing to let you know that the leaders of Cypress Church have decided to move our Sunday services indoors for the winter months, beginning November 8, 2020. We feel compelled to do this for a number of reasons, some of which I will outline below. I have tried to contact you via email and phone regarding our concerns over outdoor services during winter, but I have yet to receive a reply, which has led to this letter.

Since March, Cypress Church has vigilantly followed the County's COVID-19 orders for "houses of worship." I have attended all your meetings with clergy. Cypress met online-only for two months, until we were allowed to meet in-person. We hosted drive-in, indoor, then outdoor services. We have met in small groups, as permitted, and continued to serve the needy, passing out nearly 15,000 food boxes to hungry families over the last four months. All the while, we have practiced social distancing protocols.

A significant percentage of our congregation has been tested for COVID-19 too. To this point, I'm not aware of one member of our congregation who has tested positive.

But now we enter the winter months. Meeting outdoors sets up our congregation for failure, exposing them to the very environment illness like COVID19 (common cold, flu, pneumonia, etc.) thrive — cold *and wet*. Not meeting in-person is not an option for us anymore. There has been too much data about the impact of isolation that has come out over the last eight months. Anxiety, depression, and suicide rates have skyrocketed. People of all ages are "failing to thrive".

Meeting outdoors for worship during winter seems reckless. It rained during our first service last Sunday. It was already cold, then it got wet. Going back to online-only services has its own serious health and safety risks. In light of these factors (and others), and being aware of the current death rate per capita in Monterey County for COVID-19 (0.0001), the leaders of Cypress Church believe it is in the best interests of our congregation, and the community at-large, to gather indoors for the winter.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature of the name "Ben" in a dark, bold, cursive font.

Ben Sobels, Pastor

**Worship Jesus // Love One Another // Serve the World**