

Dear Members and Friends—

As you no doubt are aware, the COVID-19 landscape continues to change daily. In some parts of the country, the number of new cases has been increasing in recent days. In Minnesota, however, we have seen something of a leveling off, and in our own area it seems as if things have remained fairly stable. This is good news, and has allowed public health and other officials to provide further opportunities for us and many others to continue the “regathering” phase of life. A little more than three weeks ago, we announced our own “Phase One” for regathering, enabling smaller groups to begin meeting either outdoors or in homes. Today, we are pleased to announce “Phase Two” of regathering at Lakeview, which takes effect on Monday, June 22. This phase does two things: It increases the number of people who should feel free to gather outside, and it opens the possibility of smaller groups meeting in the church building. We are both pleased and thankful to be at this point.

What “Phase Two” looks like.

- Groups of up to 25 persons are encouraged to meet outside while still following the expectations of distancing, etc., outlined in Phase One. Lakeview’s parking lot continues to be available for those gatherings, provided that groups schedule their gatherings with the office to ensure that we do not unintentionally create “collisions.”
- A limited number of groups up to 10 people will be able to meet in Lakeview’s building. At this point, those gatherings will generally need to occur during office hours (9AM-4PM Monday through Friday), so that a staff person can be on hand to assist. Some groups may be able to meet at other times, but that will be based on our ability to ensure that there is proper assistance or oversight available from a church staff member. During this phase, priority for building and parking lot use will go to groups which have the highest need, such as Celebrate Recovery.
- The number of groups allowed in the building at one time will depend on space availability and other considerations, such as the need to clean meeting areas between gatherings. That means that all gatherings must be scheduled in advance with the church office. Additionally:
 - We recommend that meetings in the building run no more than 60 minutes. This will allow for cleaning and other logistical needs between groups.
 - We recommend that, as much as possible, groups which meet regularly have the same members each time. This helps reduce the potential of exposing others to the virus. Also, children under the age of 10 will not be admitted to the building at this time.
 - Group leaders are expected to arrive at least 10 minutes ahead of time, and to check in with a church staff member. This will ensure that questions and other concerns can be addressed ahead of when the meeting actually begins.
 - Group leaders will be required to submit a roster of all participants to the staff member on duty after the meeting. This will facilitate contact tracing if someone in a particular group would later test positive or be exposed to COVID-19.
 - As group members arrive, they will be met at a designated entrance door, asked a few questions about their current health status, and then be directed

to their specific meeting location. If you come for a meeting, please avoid crowding either in the parking lot or at the door, and remember to maintain a six-foot social distance throughout your time in the building.

- Group participants will be expected to limit their presence in the building to only the space designated for their group. A restroom will be available for emergencies only—not for general use, and areas such as the staff office suite will not be open to others outside the church staff, unless you have called ahead for an appointment.
- Masks will be required in the building and will be provided at the door for those who may not have one when they arrive. Please remember the saying that, “My mask protects you. Your mask protects me.” The only exceptions to this will be in pre-approved situations where there is a specific medical issue involved with wearing a mask and all other participants have given permission for someone to not be masked.
- Please remember to clean your hands as you enter and exit, and at other times during your meeting as necessary. Hand sanitizer will be available at both entrance and exit doors, as well as in the meeting areas.
- When your meeting is over, you will be directed to exit through a designated door which will usually be different from where you entered. As you leave, please go directly to your car.
- If you desire something to drink, you will need to bring your own bottled water. Food will not be allowed in the building.
- As with other situations, if you are over 65, have underlying health conditions, or have a compromised immune system, it is safest for you to stay at home.
- Following each group gathering, the area used will be cleaned in preparation for the next group. Special attention will be paid to “high touch” items. We want each group that meets at church to feel confident about the safety of the space they will be in.

What you can continue doing, even away from the building.

Even though we have not been meeting at church, we have continued to be the Church. Children’s ministry, Youth ministry, worship and other online options have provided opportunities for us to continue studying, worshipping, and meeting in various ways. For the foreseeable future, online worship will continue, and even though we are still distanced, there are still many ways for us to be Lakeview, and to pursue Christ together and advance his priorities, both across the street and around the world. As you know, the Church is not limited to a physical building or a single location. The Church is a “body,” which means it is people. Good ministry can happen in many places. Toward that end, please consider the following possibilities for you, your family, and your friends:

- Meet with your community group at an area park, trail, or other location. Enjoy the summer together here along the North Shore.
- Invite others to join you for worship in your home. You could do that with church friends—or better still, you could invite someone who is NOT part of Lakeview to join you. Consider using the week's discussion questions for conversation afterward.
- Take advantage of opportunities to BLESS others by praying, making some kind of personal contact, finding an opportunity to serve them, or to share your story of new life in Christ.
- Take a prayer walk in your neighborhood, around your school or work, or at some other significant place in your neighborhood or the community.
- If you have neighbors or friends with VBS-aged kids, invite them to participate in Lakeview's “Backyard VBS.” (The deadline for signing up is coming soon—so hurry with your invitations!)
- If you have neighbors or friends with teenage students, invite them to be part of the summer youth ministry events. Some things are online, but others will be group gatherings for middle school and high school respectively.
- Beyond these things, use your imagination! Being away from the building actually frees us up to be out in the community as salt and light—out in the community advancing Christ’s priorities across the street. Look for opportunities to touch others for Christ in ways that you might not have had otherwise.

What’s Next?

We are making progress with installing permanent streaming equipment in the sanctuary, and look forward to the ways that will enhance our online worship experience in the future. We do look forward to the day when we can again gather in larger groups onsite, and we continue to monitor the potential to begin in-person worship at some point. However, the considerations that go into having larger gatherings are considerable, and we want to be sure that, when we do move to that place, that it will be a positive experience for everyone who is able to participate. The issues connected with that go far beyond whether or not we are allowed to gather. Some churches which have begun meeting in person again have actually found the experience to be disappointing. We want to avoid that for you and for others.

Even though it's only June, we also know that fall is coming quickly. In light of that, it won't be long until we begin fall planning in earnest. Precisely what that will look like is yet to be determined. Whatever it looks like, much of our focus will be on providing opportunities for participation—whether it's in groups meeting together or gathering online. In the past, we've often focused on "attendance." For at least the near future, the focus will be on participation, and providing opportunities that will be valuable for you and others. We appreciate your ongoing prayers as we continue to navigate what is still an uncertain and often confusing landscape.

Thank You!

James 1:2-3 tells us to "consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." The last three months have certainly been trying, and they have certainly tested our perseverance. As to the "joy" part, though, that's a bit tougher to cling to for many of us. The COVID-19 pandemic, and then the events following the death of George Floyd, have taken their toll on all of us, though in decidedly different ways at different times. Part of that toll—particularly with COVID-19—has come from the fact that there has been so much that we didn't know at the beginning and have been forced to learn along the way. Furthermore, the dynamics of the situation have often varied based on local context and other factors. Because of that, both at Lakeview and elsewhere, there have been a variety of perspectives, opinions, and experiences. Different churches have taken different approaches and made different responses. In our own case, we have often had to consider not only those different perspectives, but also the competing needs across the breadth of our congregation. We realize that the decisions we have made have not pleased everyone. However, in keeping with James 1:5, we have sought—and will continue to seek—to act wisely, with an eye toward what seems most appropriate for Lakeview as a whole. We appreciate and thank you for your ongoing patience, grace, understanding, and prayers.

Sincerely,

Brian Hard, Leadership Team Chair
Rich Theilen, Interim Pastor

