

5/29/20

Dear WOL Family and Friends,

These days have been uncertain times for many. However, two things have been certain for us at WOL: God has been with us and we miss being with each other.

Since mid-March, our exhortation to one another has been to Trust God & Act Wisely. Church, I'm so thankful and proud of how you have responded during these unusual times. We have both demonstrated our faith and trust in the Lord, while exercising the wisdom He has given us to make difficult decisions during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Praise God that circumstances surrounding this crisis have improved enough that we can begin to take some first steps toward coming together for our in-person Sunday worship gatherings. **June 7th is the date we will resume.**

As we make plans to do so, please know that the elders have labored and prayed over the complexity of this situation with great soberness. Attempting to gather such a large group of people, given this unique situation, brings a convergence of factors which make it difficult for us to resume services as they were before. In fact, it's probably wise for us all to reset our expectations for a new normal; at least for a season.

There are several sections to this letter. Our goal is to help everyone to understand the plan for our worship gatherings, what to expect when we come, what's needed from each of us and various information to help address questions we may have.

A Candid Word

Before we go any further, I'm going to be utterly candid for a moment. Brothers and sisters in the Lord, there is a whirlwind of diverse thoughts, perspectives and opinions circulating right now; many of which are backed with much emotion and passion. Please understand, the enemy will seek to exploit these things and use them as footholds for creating division in the Body of Christ. Our church is no exception.

So I urge you, no, I plead with you to humbly ask the Lord to help you exercise the fruit of His Spirit in order to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). I would encourage everyone to refresh themselves with passages of scripture like Philippians 2:1-11 and Colossians 3:12-17.

Under these less than ideal circumstances, we will all have to work together. I'm confident we will all do our best to honor the beauty of corporate worship, while also wisely protecting the safety, health and well-being of one another in this COVID-19 era.

The Plan

As we return to our corporate worship services, we continue to have a responsibility to act wisely. Based on what the accepted medical leaders are stating, along with those in roles of federal and state leadership, COVID-19 is still a real threat and will require continued measures to keep people safe. Since we are not medical experts and knowing we're commanded to honor those in authority, after much labored prayer for wisdom, the elders believe the Lord would have us resume our public worship services, while implementing the safety protocols we've been given by these authorities.

Therefore, **starting on June 7th** we will be holding two worship services. The first service will begin at 8:30 am and the second service will begin at 10:45 am. The duration of this format is unknown at this time. The circumstances necessitating it will be monitored regularly.

Why two services? This plan is based on the need to honor the accepted social distancing protocols designed to keep people safe from spreading or catching the COVID-19 virus. In light of that need, when we looked at the number of people who have expressed their plan to attend our in-person worship services, we determined that one service would not allow us to act wisely and in good conscience regarding your safety. This plan was not an easy decision. A number of options were considered. Each one had its challenges and drawbacks. In the end, two services seemed the best option to pursue for this *temporary* period.

What To Expect

As we begin gathering in person again, there are a number of steps we will be taking in order to insure the safety and health of everyone. These safeguards are both for your wellbeing and that of our community, in which we all interact.

In section 2 of this letter, you will find specifics regarding our **Reopening Safeguards**. As you read them, please remember this situation is still very fluid. All plans must be flexible and held with open hands. We're giving you what we know at this moment and will continue to learn as we move forward.

In section 3, you will find a collection of **Miscellaneous Responses** to questions you may be asking.

Finally, in section 4, you'll find a collection of **Supplemental Material** providing some of the information upon which our safeguards are based.

Preparation & Prayer

Before we move on to the specifics, I'd like to share two last thoughts. In the turbulent waters of these past months and in the anticipation of being together again, it's easy to allow our focus to shift.

For those planning on attending one of these services, be prepared that you're going to be tempted to focus on temporary, earthly or personal aspects of the gathering. It's only normal to think about what might be different or how you're impacted by these new circumstances and protocols. I feel strongly the need to caution us to be aware how the enemy will try to hijack these tendencies for his agenda, shifting our focus off of worship and onto our own preferences, desires and opinions.

Therefore, I'm encouraging each of us to do two things that will help us prepare for this unique season of corporate worship.

First, to help refresh or realign our focus regarding our worship gatherings, let's ask ourselves these questions:

- Why do I come to a worship service?
- Who is the main focus of our worship service?
- What do I expect as a result from our gathering together in worship in praise?

Second, let's remember that at the core of worship is a desire to celebrate God's glory and see His body build up. So let's dedicate ourselves to praying for one another, for God to be glorified in our gatherings, and for the needs of those unable to be with us in person.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Making Disciples - One People, One Purpose, One Prayer, "Thy will be done!"

Blessings On You,
Pastor Scott

SECTION 2 - Reopening Safeguards

Reopening Safeguards for the Word of Life Family

As we begin to meet again for worship on Sunday, our facilities are being carefully cleaned and sanitized. We are also being careful to clearly communicate and are asking that the following social distancing and health guidelines be followed:

- If you are sick, showing symptoms, or have been asked to quarantine by medical/health professionals, we ask that you NOT attend in person but rather participate through our YouTube Live Stream.
- Due to cleaning and social distancing concerns, there will be no nursery or children's ministry at this time. We will look to add these areas at a later date to be determined.
- Entrance & Seating
 - We ask that you wear a mask (if you are able to), particularly at times when you are not able to maintain a distance of six feet between families, (i.e. entering, exiting and moving around).
 - Recognizing there are varying convictions and beliefs concerning masks, we will designate a separate section for those who intend to keep masks on throughout the service
 - We ask that you respect accepted social distancing guidelines between families/households as you enter and are seated
 - Exterior doors will be held open by greeters
 - Auditorium doors will remain propped open (please limit any talk in the foyer once our service starts)
 - Seating will be in every other row
 - Ushers will manage seating and dismissal. Please move toward the center of the pew as you enter, to limit exposure and contact with others and reduce cleaning needs.
 - To avoid congestion, ushers will dismiss everyone, one row at a time.
- Social Distancing Changes
 - Bathroom doors will be partially propped open to minimize contact
 - There will be no printed bulletins, but bulletins are available on the website
 - Hymnals, Pew Bibles, Connection Cards, and Friendship Book have been removed from the pews due to sanitizing purposes. We will establish an online form in lieu of our Communication Cards and Friendship Books.
 - Offerings: We will not be passing offering plates (offering boxes and/or baskets will be in the back). We encourage the use of online giving at this time, if you are able.
 - We encourage hand sanitizing both entering and exiting the auditorium. We will supply hand sanitizer to the best of our ability, but encourage families to bring their own as possible.
 - We ask that you refrain from handshaking and hugging at this time
 - No coffee will be available or donuts
 - We ask that any socializing be done outdoors, respecting accepted social distancing guidelines

- Communion
 - On Communion Sunday's pre-packaged Communion elements (cup and bread in one) will be available in the foyer. We will not be passing a tray. If you plan to participate in Communion, please pick up one cup per participant.

- COVID-19 Communication Plan:
 - If you are diagnosed with, begin to exhibit signs of COVID-19, or have had recent known exposure to COVID-19 or someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, we ask that you inform Pastor Tim of when you attended and note any areas you visited within the building. The Health Department will be contacted and likely launch contact tracing.
 - Posters noting symptoms and precautions have been placed throughout the building in accordance with health department guidance. These have been posted based on Health Department and CDC recommendations. We ask that, regardless of personal convictions, please respect these posters, as they are posted for the protection of Word of Life Baptist Church.

SECTION 3 - Misc. Q &A

Misc. Q &A

- ❖ **Is the two service format a permanent change?** *No. This decision is based solely on the present circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 social distancing safety guidelines.*

- ❖ **Will both services be identical?** *The ultimate focus of worship and the Word will remain the constant foundation for any service we lead. The ministry of the Word will certainly be the same in both services. However, this format will challenge the capacity and resources of the teams that serve in our music ministry. We are working on options to bring as much consistency as possible to both services. We will do the best we can, but ask for your patience, understanding and grace.*

- ❖ **Why is the first service at 8:30 am and not 9:00 am like it was a number of years ago?** *Sufficient time will need to be allowed for necessary cleaning and sanitizing after the first service, in preparation for the those attending the second service.*

- ❖ **What is being done to address the cleaning and sanitizing of the church facilities?** *As we begin to meet again for worship on Sunday, our facilities are being carefully cleaned and sanitized. This is no small task given the seriousness of the situation. Again, we ask for your help and understanding.*

We Need Your Help

To insure the best quality of safety and care, we will need to quickly conduct a routine of cleaning between the first and second services. Our Site Manager, Linda Fisher, will need a group of volunteers to help with this critical task. Here's an opportunity to live out the principle:

"Teamwork Works, When Everybody Works".

If you would be able and willing to help, please contact the church office by email (info@wolbc.org) or phone (354-8019). If you leave a message, someone will be in touch with you.

- ❖ **When will other ministry groups and activities restart?** *That's the million dollar question. Unfortunately, we just don't know. We will continue to monitor things on a weekly, even daily basis. For the moment, we're proceeding first with the Sunday services. By mid to late June we hope to have a better perspective on the prospect of slowly implementing other elements of other WOL ministries. Only time will tell, but we will keep you informed.*
- ❖ **How are we doing financially?** *The brief answer is that our giving has been lower than normal. There are a variety of reasons for this, as you can imagine. As the Lord leads and enables each of us, we are hoping and trusting that our giving will catch up to our 2020 budget and its related commitments to our missionaries, ministries and staff. Please make this a matter of prayer and consider your act of worship through giving, as the Lord leads you.*
- ❖ **When will the support staff return?** *At this time, our Site Manager, Linda Fisher has returned to work as of May 26th. As of June 8th, our Church Secretary, Jeanne Romero will return to her role in the office. A return date for Sara Zimmerman, the Assistant to the Youth & Family Pastor, is still to be determined.*

SECTION 4 - Supplemental Material

A Brief Summary of Basic Infection Prevention Measures For Staff At Word of Life Baptist Church Based on Michigan District Health Department No. 4:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have provided the following control and preventative guidance for all workers, regardless of exposure risk:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough/sneeze in your upper sleeve.
- Immediately throw away used tissues in the trash, then wash hands. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, handles, light switches, tables, toilets, faucets, sinks, and cell phones.
- Avoid touching common surfaces in public places, such as elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, etc. Use elbows or knuckles to push buttons/door handles when you don't have a tissue or sleeve to cover your hand/fingers.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Maintain a distance of six (6) feet from other coworkers whenever feasible.

Word of Life Baptist Church will post in prominent areas within the workplace the "COVID-19 Infection Prevention Flyer" (attached) to inform employees of recommended infection control techniques.

A formal policy and training video has been adapted from Health Department guidelines for Word of Life Baptist Church staff, and is available upon request. See Pastor Tim for details.

Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith from the Center for Disease Control (CDC)

The CDC has provided Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html>

Here are select portions that have informed our decisions and procedures at Word of Life Baptist Church. Regardless of your personal convictions, we ask you to consider the impact on our witness and others within the congregation whose convictions may vary from your own:

Promote healthy hygiene practices

- Encourage staff and congregants to maintain good hand hygiene, washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Encourage staff and congregants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
- Whenever soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- Consider posting signs – Signs from Michigan District 4 Health Department have been posted throughout the building.

Cloth face coverings

- Encourage use of cloth face coverings among staff and congregants. Face coverings are most essential when social distancing is difficult. Note: Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects in between uses.
- Develop a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
- Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep them away from children.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility.
- If your faith community offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between services. Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water.

Promote social distancing

- Take steps to limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities and subject to the protections of the First Amendment and any other applicable federal law.
- Promote [social distancing](#) at services and other gatherings, ensuring that clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and attendees at the services follow social distancing, as circumstances and faith traditions allow, to lessen their risk.
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow.
- Consider appropriate mitigation measures, including taking steps to limit the size of gatherings maintaining [social distancing](#), at other gatherings such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups and any other programming, where consistent with the faith tradition.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Take steps to minimize community sharing of worship materials and other items

- Consistent with the community’s faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encouraging congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the main, or electronic methods of collection regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- Consider whether physical contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, or kissing) can be limited among members of the faith community.
- If food is offered at any event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid buffet or family-style meals if possible.

Nursery/Childcare

- If a nursery or childcare will be provided during services and events, refer to CDC’s information on [preventing the spread of COVID-19 in childcare settings](#) and adapt as needed for your setting.
- If holding summer day camps, refer to CDC’s information on [youth and summer camps](#) and adapt as needed.

Staffing and Training

- Train all clergy and staff in the above safety actions. Consider conducting the training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained.