

To the Fellowship of First Presbyterian Church at Greenville Ohio,

I hope you are all encouraged and blessed despite the long absence of our in-person meetings. I am writing this letter to update the congregation regarding our plan to re-open services after our long time of self-distancing. Please read this letter in its entirety, since it contains important information regarding not only when, but how\* we are able to resume our Sunday morning worship services.

The Session met on Thursday May 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss the resumption of our worship services. After careful consideration and much discussion, we have agreed to make May 31<sup>st</sup>, the date for our return. Services will begin at 10:30 AM May 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. We understand that this date will be long overdue for many of you. And simultaneously there are those in our fellowship who will remain cautious and perhaps desire to worship from home for a while. This is completely understandable and welcome. Those who feel they should stay home due to higher risk factors such as age or health can continue to view our worship services online from the safety and comfort of their living room. For those who wish to come and worship in person, please be sure to read the rest of this letter carefully for important information regarding how we intend to stay safe as we meet. The session wants to make it clear that there is no degree of greater or lesser faith or moral character attached to either decision to come in or to stay home.

We are one body, worshipping the same Lord and there is grace for all regardless of your position on this matter. We want to be associated more with Jesus than any political party. Thus, all discussions regarding this issue from your Elders has been done with spiritual care and wisdom for God's people and the Great Commission in mind. We hope the decisions reached by the elders are received with grace and unity for our church and its witness for Jesus Christ here in Greenville. With that in mind, here are the details you need to know...

There will be stages to our opening. These stages may be laid out in the following manner.

1. Stay Home (This is our current stage) We are currently transitioning out of this stage to stage 2.
2. Stay Safe (This is the stage we are beginning as of May 15<sup>th</sup>) We are opening up the church to small groups such as staff meetings, deacons meetings, session meetings, and bible studies.
  - a. Staff Resumes Normal Office hours May 15<sup>th</sup>
  - b. No more than 10 to a group; (unless otherwise permitted at time of request)
  - c. Get Office approval before building use for any of these meetings.
    - i. All such meetings will have a church member make the request and be present at the use of the facilities.
    - ii. A representative for the group will need to sign a form acknowledging these protocols and their agreement to abide by them.
  - d. Maintain distances of 6 ft
  - e. Masks are recommended but optional.
3. **Re-Open Church Sunday Worship Services (with key safety guidelines) this will take place on May 31<sup>st</sup>.** Here are some important safety protocols that we will use and expect all attendees to help us maintain for all of our safety.
  - a. Entrance to the building will be at a single entrance. (the handicap doors) The door will be propped open so no one will have to touch the handle repeatedly.
  - b. The floor will be marked to help us maintain a 6 ft distance as we move in and out of the sanctuary.
  - c. Please use the restroom at home before coming. This will help us keep the restrooms open for fewer people. If you can avoid using it so that those who need it most have it available, please do so. Again, this keeps people from touching doors and handles repeatedly.
  - d. Masks are optional. Please bring your own from home. The church will have a limited supply available for those who need them and (DO NOT ALREADY HAVE ONE).

- e. We will maintain seating distances of six feet apart in the pews. The pews will be marked, and an usher will help you find a seat to maintain this distance. Please note that family units can sit together without the six-foot distance.
  - f. Sanitizer will be on the table at the entrance of the building. If you touch a rail or door on the way into the building, please sanitize your hands.
  - g. The following will **not** be taking place during this phase of re-opening...
    - i. No Childcare
    - ii. No Sunday School
    - iii. No Coffee Hour
    - iv. No Socializing in the building After Church
    - v. No Bulletins will be handed out.
4. OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS TO NOTE:
- a. There will be Communion. This will be done by using pre-packaged and sealed communion kits.
  - b. IMPORTANT: We will not be checking temperatures at the door. This means that if you are not feeling well, we ask that you check your own temperature at home before coming and please stay home if you have any health concerns; such as a cough, a temperature or other body aches.
  - c. As mentioned above, we will be continuing our online services. That means if you do not feel comfortable resuming our regular worship practices, you can join us online.
  - d. We will be keeping an eye on the data from local officials. If the virus data here in Darke County and Greenville warrants reversing course on this, we will do so immediately for the safety of our congregants and visitors. Therefore, stay up to date with announcements and be sure you are on our phone tree, Facebook, and email chains.

In the meantime, please catch our Sunday services on the website where we will keep you informed of these decisions. We look forward to the end of the month when we can get back together. Please stay in prayer for our national, state, and local officials, first responders, and the leadership of our congregation. Please pray for our nation, that the virus will go away and our economy will recover soon. Please pray for families who are feeling the effects of the lockdown both emotionally, as well as financially. Thanks again for all your patience with me during this time. I have been trying to stay in touch on the phone, and I know for some of you we have not yet touched base. I thank you for all of your prayers for our safe relocation to Greenville. We are settling in nicely and the many weeks of packing and transplanting the family are finally over. Please email [infogreenvillepres@gmail.com](mailto:infogreenvillepres@gmail.com) if you have any prayer requests or other needs. God Bless you all, and see you soon,

For Christ's Kingdom and His Glory,

Pastor Andrew Gilman