

New Hope Friends Church
Pastor Andrew Hise
4451 US 70 East
Goldsboro, NC 27534

To my missed and loved congregation,

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

-Ephesians 4:1-6

As we have been separated in physical location these many weeks, I am reminded of these words of the Apostle Paul, a prisoner for the Lord. In many ways, we may feel more disjointed, more separated, and more individualistic than we ever have. But we know that we are not a people who are defined by a physical space or a physical meeting. We are a people who are united by the Spirit, our calling, our faith. We are a people who are united by a spiritual reality that is called the church, not a physical space. We have sought to maintain the unity of the Spirit through these difficult times even though we cannot be together physically. But now we are looking toward the new reality of what our meeting together will look like and how we can, once again, meet in person.

This letter is written as an encouragement to each of you and as a guide for how we will be able to return to in person gatherings while also maintaining the safety and health of all of our church. As we have entered into Phase 2 of reopening in North Carolina, the most recent executive order by Governor Cooper exempted worship services and other religious gatherings from the mass gathering limits. However, the order also strongly recommended that churches continue to limit in person gatherings and that worship services should follow certain guidelines. In response to the executive order and for the continued safety and health of our church, we have formulated guidelines for returning to Sunday worship services only. These guidelines, which are laid out below, are based on recommendations from the CDC and the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

Worship Services

We will plan to return to in-person worship services on **Sunday, June 7, 2020 at 10:30 AM** with the following guidelines:

Worship services will be held in the Family Life Center

Social distancing will be practiced.

- Chairs will be placed at 6 feet intervals. Family units should sit together.
- We will enter and exit through the main Family Life Center entrance, located on the side. The doors that will be used for entering/exiting will be propped open.
- All doors of the large multi-purpose room of the FLC will be propped open to encourage air-flow and circulation. These doors may also be used to exit when dismissed.
- Masks or face coverings are strongly encouraged when entering and exiting the building and in moving to the restroom. Masks will be provided at the entrance.
- Standing, greeting and fellowshiping in the entryway of the FLC is strongly discouraged. Greeting and fellowship should be done outside or within the large multi-purpose room while maintaining social distancing.
- No choir will be used and social distancing will be practiced while entering and exiting the stage area.

Hygienic practices are encouraged.

- Washing hands after using the restroom and using hand sanitizer after touching any surface is strongly encouraged.
- Hand sanitizer will be offered at the entrance/exit.
- No bulletins will be used. All information will be shared on the screen.
- No offering plate will be passed. Offering bins will be placed at the exits.
- No hymnals or pew bibles will be used.

No children's ministry will be offered.

This will include nursery, Junior church and any other children's ministry. Children are welcome to sit in the service with their family. Parents will be responsible for their children during the service. We encourage each family to use their best judgment when deciding whether to come or not.

We will continue to protect our vulnerable population.

The recommendation of the CDC and NC Department of Health and Human Services is that all people over the age of 65 and those with pre-existing conditions should continue to remain at home during Phase 2. We ask that you consider staying at home if you fit into this category. There will be online streaming options offered for the foreseeable future. We encourage each individual to use their best judgment when deciding whether to come or not.

We encourage individual monitoring of symptoms.

Each person is encouraged to self monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. If a person is exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, fever, or shortness of breath, they should stay at home.

Supplemental cleaning will be practiced.

Online options (FB and Youtube) will be available for those who will want to stay at home.

Overall, these guidelines require all people to use common sense and to be aware of others. Please be kind to each other during this difficult time. Not all people will come to in person meetings right away. The decision to stay home should not only be encouraged but also respected by all of our New Hope church family.

We gather back in person, knowing that it is not physical presence that binds us, but that we are bound together by the love of Christ in dying for the church. We are a people saved by grace, not a place. We are people marked by grace, not by judgment. Let us treat each other in the example of Christ, sacrificially giving up our own comfort so that we can edify and love one another.

I love you all and will see you soon.

God Bless!

Pastor Andrew Hise