

June 29, 2020

Dear St. Paul's Church,

As a leadership team, we have been meeting, praying, and discerning God's best for us here at St. Paul's. We have learned a lot through this journey – and God has invited us to continue learning what it means to fully devote ourselves to putting God's Kingdom first. Clearly, we need to remember who we are, why we're here and where we're going.

So, on their behalf, I would like to share with you our plans for regathering back on site at St. Paul's Church.

Our plan is to regather for in-person worship on **Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>**. And we are going to have two worship services based on our previous schedule – our traditional service at **8:30 AM** and our contemporary service at **10:15 AM**.

Between now and then, our staff and leaders are taking extra measures to ensure that things will be safe, taking into consideration the guidelines of our health communities. And we are going to be regathering in phases over the next several months.

On July 12<sup>th</sup> we will initiate **Phase 1**. In **Phase 1**, here's what you can expect....

1. When you come to our church facilities, you will notice that our sanctuaries have been set up to accommodate for social distancing. That means in the West Sanctuary, rows of pews have been blocked off. In the South Sanctuary, seats have been either taken out or repositioned. We are asking you to observe a 6-foot distance between you and any others who are seated or standing near you—unless they are members of your family.
2. Also, we will be accommodating enough seats for 50% of our normal capacity. So, we are asking those of you who wish to join us for in-person worship at the church to make a reservation. You can do so in one of three ways:
  - a. by downloading and using our brand-new St. Paul's Church app on your mobile device. Detailed instructions are attached or included with this letter.
  - b. by making a reservation on our church's website – <https://www.stpauls.faith> and clicking on the "Worship Reservation" button on the Home Page.
  - c. by calling the church office Monday through Thursday – 717-367-1889 – during normal open hours. If you call after hours, please leave a message on the general office voice mail and a staff member will return your call to complete your registration.

Reservations will be accepted both online and by phone beginning on the Monday prior to the service.

When you make your reservation on the app or the website, you will receive an email confirmation. Reservations made thru the office for those without email will receive a confirmation in the mail. When you arrive for your service, there will be volunteers noting your attendance once you have entered the church. We are doing attendance to know who was in the building if the need arises to provide contact-tracing.

3. We will have the Main Worship Services Only. There will be no children's ministries, no nursery care, and no Sunday School for any age group. We anticipate that those ministries will be opening for **Phase 2** of our regathering in the Fall, but for now, we're going to have only the worship services.
4. In addition to the 2 onsite services, we will be LIVE-STREAMING at those times as well for those who will be worshipping with us online -- and we will also be providing On Demand recorded services on YouTube for your use for whatever time works for you.
5. You also need to know that in Phase 1, we will **NOT BE SINGING** congregational songs in our on-site sanctuary worship services. All music elements – unless they are instrumental only or solo based – will be pre-recorded and projected on screen. Our people, but pre-recorded – as you have been used to seeing in our online experiences. Why are we doing this? For Phase 1, we are acknowledging the medical community's beliefs that singing within a closed room environment can spread the virus – and we are choosing to put others before ourselves – whether we agree with this principle or not, whether we like it or not. I realize that this may disappoint some of you. We will get back to singing together soon. In the meantime, let's be patient with one another, kind, and holding one another in grace.
6. So, when you arrive, you will be coming into the **MAIN DOORS ONLY**. Obviously, if you have ADA accessibility needs, you may feel free to use the **Portico Entrance**. These main doors will be opened. Greeters (who will be masked) will welcome you. Those who have not checked-in will be guided to volunteers to complete the process. You will then come up the main stairs on the **RIGHT SIDE** and head directly toward your respective sanctuary where ushers will be assisting in seating.

Also, with the decision to join us for in-person worship comes some specific expectations and responsibilities that we will share for the good of everyone's experience. These responsibilities include the following:

1. In order to respect one another, there are some specific things that we want to share with you to help us get started in Phase 1.
  - a. **We are requiring everyone to wear a Face Mask.** Obviously, we won't be expecting that infants and children under 6 years old to wear a mask,

but everyone 6 years old and older would need to be masked. I realize that some of you may not want to wear a mask, but we are asking you to do so in to honor this boundary. Let's do this for the benefit of all. If you are downright against the wearing of masks, then we invite you to participate with our online worship services from your home.

- b. Common areas / gathering spaces will be closed – including our café.
  - c. Hand sanitizer stations will be positioned at various spots and we want to encourage frequent use of them.
  - d. If you need to sneeze or cough – cover your mouth and nose or sneeze or cough into your elbow.
  - e. Our Restrooms will be cleaned prior to the services. But generally, if you use the facilities, please wipe down the counter surfaces after use and then use hand sanitizer as you exit. There will be volunteers monitoring the number of people in the restrooms to promote social distancing.
  - f. For the rest of this year, we will not be using or handing out any bulletins or Weeklys. If you are accustomed to taking notes during the sermons (which we love!), you will need to bring your own notebook and pen or pencil. You will also need to bring your own Bible – because we will be removing all the Bibles and Hymnals from the sanctuaries for Phase 1. Connection Cards and Pew Envelopes have also been removed from the sanctuaries.
  - g. We will not be shaking hands or hugging or high fiving. Let's greet each other instead with a smile, a bow, and a word of greeting.
  - h. If you are HIGH RISK – whether because of age or health conditions – or if you are sick, especially with a fever and/or a cough, please stay home and keep worshipping with us online. Before you sign up, consider the following questions. In fact, if you answer yes to any of these questions, please stay at home and watch the service online (for the safety of others): Do you have a fever? Are you not feeling well? Do you have a cough? Have you, or anyone in your family tested positive for COVID-19? While we would love to see you, we love you more – and want you to stay healthy.
2. There's lots of tension out there in our world related to getting back to church. Some feel we should be fully open already – in fact, some feel angry that we stopped worshipping in our facilities from the beginning – and others feel the opposite and are still very anxious. **THIS IS WHAT WE WILL DO...** We will respect the thoughts and preferences of others and not make anyone feel lesser or non-spiritual because of their choices. We will not resort to name calling. If we

can't be encouraging, then our words are not helpful – and therefore, we should remain silent. Humility, generosity and patience with one another need to define how we treat one another.

- a. Listen, attending in person is not a sign that we are more mature, godlier, or more committed to God or to the church than those who stay at home. Staying at home does not make us smarter, more caring, or somehow weaker or stronger in faith than those who worship in person. Let's keep an attitude of love and concern for one another.
3. Now, you also need to know that we are not going to be social distancing police. We are not going to be walking around enforcing rules. Instead, we are expecting that each of us will put the needs of others ahead of our own. Let's rise to the occasion and do our best to show love to one another. After all, our mission is to out-love the world. Let's start with one another in the church.

We look forward to journeying together as God defines how we do church. Let's stay positive, hopeful and loving.

We miss you and we love you. See you in person or online on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

Peace and love,

pastor david

**A video version of this message is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdiU4fXcc0c>**