

May 14, 2020

Dear Church Family,

Greetings in Christ Jesus! After much prayer, research, deliberation and planning, the staff and the deacons would like to announce the incremental and mitigated reopening of the church for worship. This will be the first of three phases back into the ministries and activities that we enjoy together as a church family.

Phase 1 will begin on **Sunday, May 24th**, initially with one morning worship service beginning at **8:30am**. We realize some of you may not quite be ready to gather together in a public place. Actually, most of the articles we have read recommend that those over 65 years of age and those with underlying health conditions hold off just a little longer before returning to public worship. So, please don't feel guilty for not meeting with us just because the door is open. This is why **we will continue to offer the online worship service** on the church website (www.fbccolumbustx.org) as well as on the church Facebook page (FBC Columbus, TX) so that you may continue to worship from home and be spiritually nourished in the Word.

At this time, due to social distancing recommendations by local, state and federal authorities, we will **not yet resume gathering for Sunday School**. This will take place later in Phase 2. Several Sunday School classes have been meeting from 10:00-11:00am via digital gathering software called *Zoom*. This is why we have chosen to first open the 8:30am service allowing these classes to continue to meet together remotely at 10:00am. Some families are gathering together for bible study in homes at 10:00am in groups of less than 10 individuals.

As we gather together in the sanctuary for a worship service at **8:30am each Sunday beginning on May 24th**, there are a few things we need to agree on as we start. We are balancing obedience to the Lord to assemble together for worship with loving one another and putting the best interest of others ahead of ourselves. So, the following is how we can do this with joy as we gather together each week for worship:

- seating will be in every other pew, giving us 16 available pews for seating
- keeping the center 6' of each pew open and sitting in family units on both ends of each pew allows us to spread out with ample space between our families
- at present we are permitted to seat 50% allowing us seating for about 112 individuals. If, however, we happen to go over this limit, we will have overflow seating set up in the Family Life Center with a recorded version of the morning service ready to display
- patience, flexibility and cooperation will be needed. With a few new cases having just emerged in our county, it is possible that between now and May 24th, we could once again be restricted to 25% or less if more cases are discovered.
- deacons will be available to assist with any seating questions you may have

- offering plates will be stationary at each door to receive tithes and offerings
- there will be no bulletins distributed at this time, so check the church website & powerpoint screen for announcements of upcoming events
- there will be **no church nursery or childcare during the worship service**, but of course, children and youth may attend worship with their parents
- until restrictions are lifted, there will be no youth or children programs
- request that we **enjoy greeting one another with words and smiles rather than hugs and handshakes**
- **wearing of masks, gloves, etc. is not required** but is fine for you to bring and wear - we just want you to come focused on the Lord.

We anticipate that a few weeks down the road, we will be opening up more opportunities for worship, growth and fellowship. For now, this is Phase 1 and will be our first step of many that we will take in returning to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. It is going to be so sweet to be together again!

This crisis is an opportunity for the body of Christ to display our genuine and sacrificial love for others. As you can imagine, **please don't come if you are sick or are experiencing any symptoms such as fever, a cough, etc.** Our church has a tremendous opportunity to shine brightly with the love of Christ to this community. As we prepare to be together for the first time on May 24th, remember that our brothers and sisters in Christ will need our encouragement and our affirmation after this long drought from the blessing of fellowship in Christ. Some may have been alone over the past few weeks, so let's share the joy of Christ with one another!

One in Christ,

Victor Morrison, on behalf of the Church Staff and the Deacon Body

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Hebrews 10:24-25

P.S. The Sunday School literature has arrived for June-August. You may drop by the office to pick up your book, or you may choose to wait until May 24th to pick it up when you attend the worship service. The SS study guides are arranged on a cart outside of the church office according to classes. Make sure you select the book that your class is using.