

A Letter From The Pastor

“When will be able to gather together again?” This is the question we are all asking ourselves right now, and one that is completely understood. We miss one another, and rightly so! One of the greatest gifts of church is being able to fellowship together as family. We miss the Sunday morning hugs. We miss having coffee before Sunday School, and catching up with one another’s latest family news. And most of all, we miss worshiping together with singing, communion, and our corporate prayers. I totally understand all of these things, because I miss them too. I can’t wait for us to be back again when it is safe to for us ALL to do so. I wanted to take an opportunity this month and clear up any questions that we may have at this time.

Question 1: Why Have We Not Already Gathered Together In Person?

I first want to reassure you all that the church has been very diligent in our discussions about the safest and most diligent way to gather together in person once again. In our most recent deacon’s meeting, it was decided that our reopening target date is set for Sunday, August 2nd. We will discuss this targeted date at our next meeting on Sunday, July 19th before making a finalized decision as to whether or not this target date can become a reality.

Question 2: What Will Need To Happen In Order For Us To Gather Together Again?

In order for us to gather in person, it is first and foremost going to depend on the CDC’s recommendations as well as the current trends of the COVID-19 cases in both North Carolina and Pitt County. As we all hope and pray, our desire is to see these numbers and cases trending downward. The highest priority of our church leadership is caring for the wellbeing of you all and only gathering again when it is safe and wise to do so.

Question 3: What Will Worship Look Like When We Gather Again?

In order for us to think ahead, I want to let you know that worship will look very different when we are able join together again. We will be sure to follow the strict recommendations of the CDC which will include but is not limited to the following measures:

- Mandatory masks for all of our church attendees.
- Hand sanitizing stations at each entrance.
- We will be doing temperature checks at the doors with a digital thermometer.
- Sunday School will be postponed until it is safe to be in smaller spaces together again.
- In worship, public singing and choir will be postponed for the time being.
- Ish and others will continue to safely lead us in worship from the platform.
- We will ask those who are at high risk to continue to join us online.
- We will be spacing our seating in the sanctuary as needed and clean all seating areas weekly.
- Our public worship practices such as taking communion and greeting one another will also be postponed temporarily.

Question 4: What Should We Expect In The Meantime?

I know this can all may sound a little discouraging, but my hope is that we look at the positives through it all. First and foremost, we have not had a single case of COVID-19 in our congregation! This is a wonderful blessing, and we want to do our best to keep it this way.

Also, it is important to remember that while we may not be in person, we are still gathering together, just simply in a different way. The bible reassures us that Spirit of God is always with us. Our online ministry is and will continue to be an extension of the Spirit's work in our church.

As always, we will continue to work hard putting together our online services each and every week. There are also plenty of ways to connect with one another online and on the phone throughout the week. We currently have Pat Dunn's Sunday School class meeting by phone on Sunday mornings, Al Joyner's small group study on Zoom on Friday Nights, Tea-Time on Tuesdays for our ladies, Thursday night meetings for our College and Young Adults, and as always, we will be meeting for prayer every Wednesday night at 7pm. I encourage you all to stay connected in these ways until we gather together in person once again. Fellowship and connection, even in an online format, is so important in these days ahead.

I will continue praying for you all, and I look forward to seeing your faces again soon!

Grace and Peace,

Asher

*"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."
– 2 Corinthians 3:17*