



May 4, 2020

FROM: Dr. Juston Gates, Jr., D.Min.
Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church Forsyth

TO: FBCF Church Membership

SUBJECT: Reopening of Campus for Corporate Worship

Dear Church Family,

I have been anxiously awaiting the moment that I would be able to compose this letter inviting each of you back to our main campus for corporate worship gatherings. However, even though that is exactly what you will read in this letter, it will take place in a fashion that is still far from “normal.” With that in mind, I need you to read the instructions that compose this letter very carefully, preparing yourselves to cooperate with the requirements fully.

First, even though Governor Parsons has lifted the stay-at-home order effective, Monday, May 4th, what has not been lifted in any sense is the 6-foot social distancing requirement. The Governor did alleviate any restriction concerning the size of any group gathering, but due to the 6-foot spacing required, we cannot resume activities as usual. On any given Sunday, we average approximately 450 in attendance between the two services provided. We have adapted a plan that will allow us to seat that many people, while still allowing for social distancing requirements and adequate disinfecting between services.

To accomplish this, we will need to limit the seating capacity of our worship center to 150-160 people in order to allow for adequate spacing. At the same time, we will provide a live stream into the fellowship hall where we will be able to seat another 100 in an overflow type setting. Thus, between the two services that will be offered, we should be able to seat, with adequate spacing, approximately 250 people each service.

However, to allow for adequate disinfecting, we cannot provide these services in our typical back-to-back fashion. To address that, beginning Saturday, May 16th, we will offer our contemporary style worship service at 5:00 pm, and our more traditional worship style service on Sunday, May 17th, at 10:30 am. Access within the campus will be limited to the foyer, worship center, fellowship hall, and appropriate bathrooms until further notice. Our plan is to continue this Saturday-Sunday format until the 6-foot social distancing requirement is removed and the threat of COVID-19 infections are greatly reduced.

To further help us as a staff to control the safety of our corporate worship environment, we will not be conducting any age-related groups (no Connection Groups) or providing any childcare during our service times. This policy will remain in effect for at least the first month, which puts us into the middle of June before a change would be considered. This policy also

applies to weekly activities at the church. In order for us to be able to control what must be deeply disinfected each week, there will be no activities conducted on the campus, other than corporate worship, until the first week in June at the earliest. More than likely, we will not resume any weekly activity on the campus (Bible studies, Pickleball, Scouts, Gideons, etc.) until the 6-foot social distancing requirement is lifted. We understand that this is difficult and inconvenient, but this is the best way for us to make our corporate worship settings as safe as possible.

So, to help prepare you for what to expect when you arrive at one of our reopening worship services, I want to give you some bullet points to consider:

- The only entrance that will be utilized into the building will be the three sets of doors at the main entrance under the portico.
- If you arrive and there is a line waiting to be seated, please remain in your vehicle.
- In the case of inclement weather, our Security Team will direct traffic in order to allow for drop-off under the portico.
- All of this will increase the time it takes to enter the building, so we ask that all in attendance arrive 15-20 minutes before the start of each service.
- Once you enter, our First Impressions team, along with some of our Deacons, will direct you.
- The only accessible portions of the campus will be the foyer, bathrooms, worship center, and fellowship hall.
- There will be no food or drink allowed (that includes coffee made on site).
- Masks are not required, but are **STRONGLY** encouraged. We suggest that you wear masks that you have purchased yourself, however, we will have a limited supply of disposable masks for those who need one.
- There will be no handling of materials: bulletins will be placed on seats; offering boxes will be strategically placed.
- Physical contact is to be avoided: no hugging, handshaking, fist-bumping, high-fiving, etc.
- If a line begins to form at the door, we will allow more people to enter the sanctuary or overflow area (fellowship hall) to be seated. Members of First Impressions and our Deacons will be helping people locate seats.
- We encourage families or those who have been together frequently during the stay-at-home order to sit together (no 6-foot requirement), but again, all seating must adhere to the 6-foot requirement otherwise.
- Seating will be pre-set prior to arrival, so we ask that no seats be moved unless changed by a staff member, member of First Impressions, or Deacon.
- Once our services conclude, we will dismiss from the rear of the worship center and fellowship hall first, until the building is emptied. Please no gathering in the foyer or portico area in order for us to maintain the 6-foot required spacing.
- For those who are at greater health risk due to underlying health issues or who are just uncomfortable with returning to a large group setting immediately, we encourage you to remain at home and worship with us via our online campus. We will make every effort to live stream our services in order to continue to provide the “at home” experience.

- If you are aware that you are actively ill (fever, cough, sneezing, etc.), do not attend a corporate worship setting until you are symptom free for 48 hours, or have been tested and determined not contagious of COVID-19.

I know that these points may not address every circumstance or answer every question, but they should be sufficient to get us ready for our relaunch on May 16th. I will post a video explaining the same material on our church Facebook page, and other announcements will be posted on the webpage and other social media outlets.

Allow me to close with this thought: we, as your staff, are so excited to be back with you in a physical sense in order to worship the Lord together again! So let's not lose that focus. Our focus is to give to the Lord the worship that he deserves, even when that worship is not quite what we are accustomed to. Let's not allow the distractions of the challenge to our normalcy make ineffective our efforts to give the Lord praise. So be in earnest prayer about our relaunch, asking the Lord to protect that time as we seek to honor him.

Sincerely,

Pastor Juston