

# Campus Bible Church | COVID-19 Response Plan | Roadmap to Reopen

Revised June 11, 2020

As the coronavirus has spread across the world, bringing with it the disease commonly known as COVID-19, churches across the nation have experienced a radical change in their ministries and worship gatherings. Most churches have transitioned to a season of reduced face-to-face interaction, leaving a series of questions.

The leadership of Campus Bible Church has worked to craft a plan that begins the process of answering these questions. These answers are not rooted in any specific political perspective, but instead in preserving the unity of our church body and the safety of our community.

This document is written to answer a couple of important questions. First, to summarize the way we are ministering in this season. Secondly, to describe how we believe Campus Bible Church will gradually return to in-person ministry and worship.

## ***What was the theological basis for us not to meet during this season?***

The reasons for not meeting in person as a whole church are indeed multi-faceted, and the decision to not meet seems at first glance to be in contradiction with our faith in the resurrection of Jesus and His sovereignty over our lives. Nevertheless, the reason to not meet face-to-face is grounded in Scripture as follows:

### **1. The Command to Love Our Neighbor**

We understand that gathering, with or without COVID-19, has the potential to spread infection, which could result in serious illness or even death. In this case, however, we are still learning about how the virus spreads and what treatments, if any, are effective. While we may not wait until a vaccine or effective therapies are established (which could be many months), we think that suspending gatherings at this time is different than, say, during flu season. There are both drug therapies and vaccinations available for the flu but nothing yet widely available for the treatment of those who contract the coronavirus.

### **2. The Command to Respect Governing Authorities**

At this precise moment, the White House, Governor's office, and Fresno County Public Health Department (the three primary jurisdictions under which our physical address falls) are all recommending social distancing, limiting group size, etc. The Governor's office has specifically requested churches use online worship, if possible. We are good neighbors when we work with the government when it does not cause us to compromise our convictions. We are not philosophically or theologically opposed to taking a stand against civil authorities for the sake of the gospel, when we deem it necessary. This is not us caving to government pressure to "shut down churches." Should we ever need to do so, we would seek to say the same as Peter and

the other Apostles did in Acts 5:29. That is not what we are doing in this case. Rather, this is wisdom, deference, and cooperation.

### **3. The Preservation of Our Witness**

As an unbelieving world watches, we walk a tight rope between two concerns: 1) Live the faith of Jesus in a way that demonstrates the gospel and the love of neighbor and 2) Be wise in our behavior so as to not harm the reputation of the church. While many of us would worship freely without fear, trusting in the Lord, a physical gathering at this time would appear to be a repudiation of common wisdom in our community and would harm the long-term reputation of Campus Bible Church in the community, and, by extension, Jesus and his gospel.

### **4. Care for Our Most Vulnerable**

As the physical doors of the church facilities are opening, those in our congregation who are at risk will likely be among those who want to return immediately, and we want to be prepared with sanitizing methods, the recommended social distancing protocols, etc. We want to demonstrate that we have equal concern for the weakest among us, and part of the job of shepherding means giving as much care as possible to all the congregants.

#### ***How is Campus Bible Church ministering to the community and the church body during this season?***

Our church is working to meet spiritual, physical, and emotional needs during this season. Some of the specific ministries are listed below. These lists change regularly based on needs. Please visit [www.campusbiblechurch.com](http://www.campusbiblechurch.com) for the most up-to-date information.

#### **Ministry to Campus Bible Church Includes:**

- Financial assistance to Campus Bible Church members in need
- Online Worship, Bible Studies, and Groups
- Online age-specific resources for preschoolers, grade schoolers, students, etc.
- Online counseling
- Online Re:Gen Groups
- Online GriefShare
- Pastoral Care
- Deacon ministry checking on widows and seniors
- Individual ministries checking on church families

#### **Community Ministry Includes (in addition to any ministries listed above):**

- Partnering with Local Ministries to provide care for our community

### ***What is Campus Bible Church's plan for returning to in-person ministry and worship?***

We look forward to returning to in-person corporate worship as a whole church family, but we also recognize we will likely need to employ a "step up" philosophy, making gradual changes until we are back to a "new normal." Our current plan is written, utilizing the recommendations given by national, state, local officials and our Board of Elders. As their recommendations change, our plan may change, as well. If our plan changes, we will communicate that with the church body. We will make decisions on when to move to a different Step based on recommendations from local officials. In addition, we are seeking input from Campus Bible Church members and other members of the community who are part of the medical, civil, and legal fields. We are also gaining much input from other churches, locally and nationally.

We are employing a Step-Up plan that utilizes the following steps:

#### **Step 1: Online Ministry**

Under the "Shelter in Place" order given by Governor Newsom in March 2020, citizens were recommended to limit movements and stay at home.

During this step, we employed:

- Online worship services
- Online Bible studies
- Online groups

#### **Step 2: Small/Medium Groups**

Since some of the restrictions have been lifted by State and Local officials, we are beginning immediately to gather in small/medium-sized groups in accordance with approved guidelines.

During this step, we are employing:

- Online worship services
- Online Bible studies
- Online Groups
- A plan in which small/medium-sized groups of up to 100 may officially gather offsite or onsite using Campus Bible Church campus facilities with approval, following guidelines set by State/Local officials including, but not limited to social distancing, mask wearing, health screenings, etc.
- Staggering group meetings in such a way that facilities can be sanitized between each group meeting
- Food and refreshments are not allowed to be served
- No separate children's activities or childcare, due to the difficulty of employing social distancing

### **Step 3: Onsite Worship**

During this step we will resume Onsite Worship Services at both campuses with limited capacities in accordance with State/Local Guidelines.

During this step, we may employ:

- Online worship services
- Online Bible studies
- Online Groups
- Small/Medium Gatherings on-site or offsite
- Onsite Worship Services
- Online worship reservations in order to properly manage service size
- Staggering service times so that the building may be sanitized between
- Touch-free environments where possible
- Food or refreshments may not be served
- No separate children's activities or childcare, Youth and Adult Sunday School

### **Step 4: Onsite+**

In Step 4 our goal is to resume regular fellowship and ministry activities in addition to our corporate worship services, where all are welcome (with the exception of those with fever and other COVID-19 symptoms).

At this time, it is difficult to predict what this new normal may include, but we anticipate things like:

- Continuing online worship services
- Continuing online Bible studies and groups
- Small/Medium/Large Gatherings on-site or offsite
- Gathering as a whole church in worship and fellowship
- A return to "normal" programming using recommended safety guidelines
- A return of children's activities and childcare, including Sunday School
- A return of Youth and Adult Sunday School classes
- A return of serving coffee and refreshments

*We are grateful for the input we have received from other ministries including Houston Northwest Church, Guidestone Financial Services and Brotherhood Mutual.*