

May 5, 2020

Dear Bible Church Family,

I am pleased to announce that beginning this Sunday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, we will begin to regather and to incorporate some limited “in person” element into our worship service. By limited, I mean that due to the strict social distancing guidelines and proper spacing requirements given to us by our governing authorities, we won’t be able to accommodate everyone who desires to attend in person each week in this initial “Phase One” plan. Please let me say at the outset that, as leaders, many aspects of this plan are very dissatisfying to us, and this is one of them! We won’t be happy until our entire church family is gathered together again, with no restrictions or limitations on our fellowship and service to one another. Unfortunately, the nature of this virus makes it appear to us that our ability to all gather together again might be a reality that lies some distance in the future. Therefore, we are glad to be able to offer some “in person” element back into the life of our body, as we believe that it is more optimal and of greater benefit for groups of us to gather together than for all of us to remain alone. Simply put, it is better for some of us to gather than for none of us to gather. Our plan envisions that members will be able to enjoy the community aspects of singing together, praying together, and hearing God’s Word preached together, as well as allowing time to fellowship outside on our patio together following the service.

Let me also say that we will continue to provide an online livestream of our services, as well as virtual Equipping Hour classes, for those who are unable to attend in person or who elect to not attend until a later date. This is a temporary and initial plan intended to cover only the two weeks of May 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. As we get updated information from our Governor and health officials concerning the lessening of restrictions, we will adapt our procedures accordingly, so please stay tuned!

Before I get to the details of the plan, let me explain some of the rationale behind it and what attitudes we all need to adopt in order to successfully implement it. This plan attempts to maximize the reward of us being able to meet together while mitigating the risk of transmitting the coronavirus to one another. We cannot eliminate the risk of transmitting this virus, but we can greatly minimize the risk of transmission if we will follow the guidelines prescribed to us by our governing and health authorities. While some of the guidelines might be inconvenient or even feel restrictive to some, we believe that they are reasonable precautions and see no reason to refuse to comply with this guidance (Romans 13:1-5). More important than our obedience to our governing authorities, however, should be our love for one another (Romans 13:8)!

Any reasonable precaution that we can take to protect the health and life of our brothers and sisters in Christ is a small sacrifice for us to make. For example, there has been much debate among our members as to whether or not facemasks should be required in the worship services or whether we should be allowed to physically greet one another with a hug or handshake. But from a Christian perspective, if I love you, I should desire your health and well-being above my

own personal desires, and therefore do what I can to protect you from the inadvertent spread of this disease. If I love you enough to shake your hand or to hug you, it should be easy for me to love you enough to not unwittingly expose you to this virus! Moreover, if by wearing a mask, I can make others feel more comfortable or even more likely to attend with us, why wouldn't I take this small step? Brothers and sisters, these are minor sacrifices for us to make compared to the reward of worshipping and fellowshiping together!

As I said in a recent sermon, it is not our diversity or differences of opinion that will cause division among us. Rather, it is our sinful attitudes that insist on getting our own way rather than putting the interests of others before our own. No one wants our high risk and vulnerable members to have to delay their gathering together with us; no one desires to have to practice social distancing, or to wear a face mask, or to be unable to physically greet one another; no one wants our young families to have to provide their own child-care; but these extraordinary times call for some extraordinary measures! But the pursuit of love and unity will demand that all of us seek to comply with them! Moreover, key to our unity will be exercising charity in our judgments toward one another regarding who is and who isn't comfortable attending the services. Some lean more to the side of caution, others don't; but let's give each member and family the liberty to make the decision that is best for their family while withholding judgment.

That being said, here is the plan for the next two weeks! We are asking that our members whose last names begin with the letters A-J attend the worship service on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and that those in the K-Z category attend on May 17<sup>th</sup>. We are asking all of our members to comply with the guidelines provided in the attachment to this letter, not as a matter of keeping the law, but rather as an expression of love for one another. Lord willing, in the weeks to come, more restrictions will be lifted and we will all be able to meet together again! Until that day, we are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible!

***“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”***

**Romans 13:10**

In Christ,

Tim

## BCLR Recongregating Plan May 10th & 17<sup>th</sup> 2020

### \*\*\* IMPORTANT NOTES \*\*\*

Arkansas' "Places of Worship Guidance" indicate that face masks be worn at all times for those over the age of 10. There will be a limited supply of masks available at the church for those who need them. As you think about attending these services, please keep in mind the guidelines given by the CDC. We would ask that you consider these guidelines as you think about your participation in the gathering for worship. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Wearing masks is not suggested for children under the age of two.

"Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance." - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html>

Those over 65 and those with underlying medical conditions should strongly consider staying home until more restrictions are lifted. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>

If you answer "Yes" to any of these questions, please stay home:

- In the last 14 days, are you aware of being in contact with anyone who has tested positive for the Coronavirus?
- Have you tested positive for the Coronavirus in the last 14 days?
- Have you had a fever, cough, pneumonia or flu like symptoms in the last 2 weeks?

While we want to be able to engage in hugging and hand shaking, please be aware of the need to maintain the six-foot limit regarding interaction with others. It would be better to engage in conversation and social interaction outside of our building. Physical contact is not allowed in accordance with Arkansas' "Places of Worship Guidance".

### \*\*\* PROCEDURES FOR MAY 10<sup>th</sup> and MAY 17<sup>th</sup> \*\*\*

#### **Assignments**

To maintain proper spacing, we need to limit the number of people in the Worship Center. So, we are asking that those whose last names begins with A-J attend on May 10<sup>th</sup> and those whose last names begin with K-Z attend on May 17<sup>th</sup>. This should allow for about 90 people each Sunday. We will make plans for the remainder of May as we see how the restrictions are changed.

#### **Cleaning/Sanitizing**

- Worship Center, Activity Center, Foyer and Restrooms will be sanitized prior to Sunday worship
- Hand sanitizer will be available at various locations

#### **Building Use**

- Cry Room and Prayer Room will be closed
- Both East and West second floor wings will be closed

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- Entry into the building will be restricted to the middle two doors from the patio area (this to allow monitoring of how many enter and to make sure screening information is visible to all who enter)
- Exit will occur through the two outer sets of doors to the patio and from the East wing and West wing doors
- Restrooms will be limited to one person at a time (parents may accompany children)
- Playground will be closed
- Doors will be propped open for touchless entry and exit
- Activity Center may be used for families with small children who cannot sit in the Worship Center – please maintain social distancing while in the Activity Center
- There will be NO BCLR Kids (childcare) available
- Water fountains will be restricted to bottle filling only
- Seating in the Worship Center will be restricted – pews will be marked, and Deacons will help direct to available areas
- Facilities are still closed to all groups except for the Sunday morning worship time

### **Arkansas' Places of Worship Guidance**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (KNWA/KFTA) — Governor Asa Hutchinson announced new guidelines for places of worship in Arkansas during an early afternoon briefing Monday.

Places of worship are allowed to resume in-person services with the following restrictions:

- Online platforms strongly encouraged
- Signs advise no entry if recent fever, symptoms or contact with positive patient
- 6-foot physical distancing except for family groups
- Face coverings worn at all times inside by anyone over 10 years old
- Worship leaders addressing congregation and performing singers may take off face mask - 12-foot physical distance required at these times
- Hand sanitizing stations at entrances
- Meet and greet times moved outside as possible
- Refreshments offered outdoors only
- Lines for entry/exit monitored for distancing
- No physical contact
- Refrain from having people come forward to common altar rail for Holy Communion, blessing
- No classes for youth or childcare
- Sanitize common areas