

**A Letter Discussing Reopening Our Church  
To Public, In-Person Worship Gatherings  
Geyer Road Baptist Church, June 1, 2020**

**1. Introductory Statement**

We recognize there are a range of opinions regarding when to reopen Geyer Road Baptist Church for in-person meetings and worship. When a date is suggested to resume services on location, there will be some people who will be ready to return and there will be other people who will not yet be ready. That is okay. No one should feel pressured or obligated to do something with which they are not comfortable. Each household needs to decide for themselves when they feel safe resuming group worship, without any remarks said or judgements made. This is especially true because a number of our church family may have health situations which put them at higher risk of Covid-19, and those conditions may or may not be known by other people. GRBC will continue to livestream our worship services for the foreseeable future, so people not ready to gather can continue to worship from home.

**2. Requirements Regarding Attendance Numbers**

A. The St. Louis County Executive has ordered that churches have no more than 25% of fire marshal capacity for any gathering, and that social distancing of six feet between people should be maintained at all times.

B. The Kirkwood Fire Marshal did recently inspect our facility and gave us a very generous capacity number of 411, 25% of which would be 103.

C. If we maintain six feet of social distancing between groups, we would not be able to fit 103 people in our sanctuary. The number could fluctuate depending on how many attendees are single, and how many a

ttend by couple/family groups. Our recommendation at this time is to limit our attendance to 60 persons.

**3. Things We Will NOT Provide in the Near Future**

A. Sunday School classes will not meet in person. We will continue online classes and hope to continue expanding choices and options in classes.

B. We will not provide nursery, child care or children's church in the near future. The worship service will not include the children's sermon time at the front with the pastor.

C. No coffee or snacks will be offered.

D. There will be no hymnals, Bibles, pencils or envelopes in the pew racks.

E. No paper bulletins or prayer sheets will be available. They will be emailed before.

F. Offering plates will not be passed. A box in which to place offerings will be placed in the lobby. People are also encouraged to mail in offerings or use electronic giving.

G. Building access will be limited to the sanctuary, lobby and main front rest rooms.

#### **4. What to Expect When Attending In-Person Worship During Phase One**

Please understand that these policies have been prayerfully considered to reduce risk of spreading disease as much as is feasibly possible. If you are not able, or not comfortable with following these conditions, we respectfully ask you to refrain from group gatherings until the next phase of more relaxed restrictions.

**A. Social distancing** of six feet is to be maintained at all times, other than related household groups. This means no hugs, handshakes or even elbow bumps. There will be no congregating closer than six feet in the parking lot, lobby, hallways, or sanctuary.

**B. Masks** will be strongly encouraged at all times. If you arrive without a mask, one will be provided for you. Masks should be worn whenever you are moving around or speaking with people. Once you are seated, masks may be removed if you find it necessary, but even then wearing the mask will be encouraged. Leadership personnel will wear masks except when they are on the platform and speaking or singing at least 15 feet away from the congregation.

**C. Assigned greeters** will greet you outside the front doors. They will ask if you have been sick or in close contact with anyone who has. If you are sick or displaying any flu-like symptoms, please show consideration for others' health and well-being and refrain from attending until you are healthy. The greeters will also be equipped with touch-less infrared thermometers. Anyone with a temperature above 100.4 degrees will be turned away and not allowed to enter. If all is satisfactory, the doors will be opened for you by people wearing gloves. Please do not touch any surfaces unless necessary.

**D. Hand sanitizer** and wipes will be available on a table in the lobby. After you enter, you are asked to sanitize your hands. Wipes may be used on any items you have with you.

**E. Names will be written down** of all attending. This will only be used in the event of a person testing positive for Covid-19, so that all attenders may be notified that an unnamed person tested positive so that appropriate precautions may be taken by those who were present that day.

**F. Bathrooms will be open** and available, but social distancing must be maintained, with limited numbers in the bathroom. People will generally be encouraged not to congregate in the hallways, but to take their seats reasonably quickly.

**G. Ushers will assist you in being seated**, similar to what happens at weddings. The sanctuary doors will be propped open. Every other pew will be taped off, staggered between the two sides of the sanctuary. No one will be seated in the front pew. Only related household groups may sit together. There must be six feet of distance maintained in the pews between unrelated people. You can be seated from the center aisle or outside aisles, so that you do not have to scoot down a pew row. Most will be seated several feet in from the end of the row.

**H. During the worship service** members are strongly encouraged to leave their masks on, but if necessary, they may be removed in the pew. Because singing releases airborne particulate matter, there will not be congregational singing during phase one. Platform persons will sing, and words will still be projected on the screens so the congregation can hum along or

mouth the words and reflect on the meaning. The Scripture reading will be done only by the platform personnel. If, at any time you find yourself experiencing continuing coughing or sneezing, we would ask you to immediately put your mask in place, and for you to remove yourself from the sanctuary as quickly as possible.

**I. After the worship service** all attenders will need to make sure they have masks properly in place. We would ask you to patiently wait to exit in an orderly manner without backups in close contact with other people. People from the back pews will exit first, and we will work our way to the front. Using all aisles will be encouraged. If you wish to speak to the pastor, he will be outside the front doors under the overhang. You are encouraged to use hand sanitizer again as you exit the lobby before entering your car. Please refrain from congregating until you are outside the building.

**J. Cleaning** Please be assured that measures are being taken that all surfaces will be cleaned thoroughly and sanitized with a special disinfectant that will be sprayed on all surfaces, including pews. All door handles, light switches, pew backs and restrooms will be given special attention. If the number of attenders dictates we need to move to having two worship services, we will schedule an hour between services and a thorough cleaning will be accomplished during that time.

**K. Signage** will be posted with these guidelines, both inside the lobby and outside the front doors. These guidelines will also be emailed or mailed to all our members and frequent attenders before the date of reopening.

**L. If you should test positive for Covid-19** or exhibit symptoms, and have attended church during that time, please contact the church immediately. We are required to contact all who were in attendance on that date to notify them that an unnamed person has tested positive. There is a protocol put forward by the CDC should anyone come into contact with an infectious person, and the situation needs to be addressed promptly.

**M. Contact via phone call** will be made by our deacons to their deacon family groups after these guidelines have been sent. They will ask if these guidelines are understood and see if there are any questions, reaffirming that these are the guidelines that will be followed for phase one of our reopening the church for in-person gatherings. They will then try to determine how many people will plan to be in attendance for the date of reopening, so we will know if one service will be adequate (60 people) or a second service will be needed, or if we need to delay until a later date.

## **5. Comments to Summarize**

We know church will look very different when we do gather together again. These guidelines are for the first phase of reopening, and will be re-evaluated when restrictions can be relaxed. It cannot be stressed enough that taking these precautions is a way of showing love to all our people, especially the many who might be high-risk if the contagion spreads. It will be very hard not to congregationally sing, or to hug our friends or not to get too close. We all sincerely hope this season will pass relatively quickly, but until it does, we must be patient.