

May 25, 2020

**Dear Second Baptist Church family,**

As we enter the month of June, we will be able to meet with groups of up to 50 people. As such, we are planning to begin a phased re-opening of church, with social distancing and hygiene measures in place to keep people safe. Because the size and manner of our gathering will be subject to so many of these rules, please be aware that this will not feel like getting back to church as usual. It will likely feel a little strange until we get used to it, and we hope that it won't be long before we can get back to our normal pattern of church services. For now, though, our services will look like this (with a launch date of **Sunday, June 7**):

- We will have two in-person Sunday morning services at the church, each capped at 50 people. You will be required to sign up in advance for a spot at these services.
- These two services will be differentiated by worship style (one traditional, one contemporary), which will allow us some freedom in navigating head-count restrictions and hopefully provide an added layer of protection for some of our most vulnerable.
- Our online livestream of the 10:45 service will continue as usual, so anyone who would prefer to keep watching from home is encouraged to do so.
- CDs of the service will still be sent out in the mail to anyone who doesn't have livestream access and who can't make it to the in-person services. If you are already on the CD list, you don't need to sign up again; Pastor Matt will automatically send you a CD if you weren't at the service.

**Sunday service option #1 - 8:30 AM, with traditional worship**

- This service will feature traditional hymns sung to piano or organ, with no praise team music. All other elements of the service will remain in place, with some minor adjustments to the way we do things (see "service changes" section below).

(In between the services is a mandatory period in which volunteers will clean & sanitize.)

**Sunday service option #2 - 10:45 AM, with contemporary worship**

- This service will feature contemporary praise and worship music, with no piano/organ music. All other elements of the service will remain in place, with some minor adjustments to the way we do things (see "service changes" section below).

**How to Reserve a Spot:**

- Because governmental restrictions forbid group sizes larger than 50, we are going to use a pre-registration process. We realize that this will feel very strange to have to reserve a seat for church, but the only other alternative would be a first-come, first-served method in which those with disabilities might be disadvantaged, and which would force us to turn significant numbers of people away at the door. Here's how to reserve a spot:
  - o We'll begin accepting reservations for each week on **Monday at 6 PM** (so the first reservation window will open on June 1).
  - o Simply send an email at that time to **calaisbaptist@gmail.com**, telling us which service you prefer and how many spaces you would like to sign up for.
  - o Those without Internet access can call in, beginning 6 PM on Monday, to have the church staff reserve a spot for them on the sign-up. Please call either Pastor Matt at 454-3333, or Gloria at 454-0203.

- If you email or call before 6 PM, you will be informed that the reservation window is not yet open.
- We will assign spots at both services in the exact order that we receive them. If you are emailing, you will get an email back (hopefully within an hour) letting you know if you received your requested spots. If you called in, you will receive a call back with the same information.
- If the service you requested was already full, you will be offered the choice of a spot at the other service (if any remain), or you can be granted an automatic reservation for a spot at your preferred service for the following week.
- Please understand that we cannot guarantee spots—depending on demand for any given week, you may need to expect to sit out a week here or there and watch from home. The only automatically reserved spots every week are for the absolute minimum number of people (essentially, the church’s paid staff who are required to make a service run).
- If a service is officially full, it is possible, though not likely, that a reserved spot may go unclaimed, or one of the very few spots we’ve kept open in the case of visitors. You can still come to the church if you wish, but if you don’t have a reserved spot, you’ll have to wait outside the door until the beginning of service, at which time we can assess how many free spots are remaining.
- Please note that if you have reserved a spot, that reservation is only valid until the service start time. If you show up later than that, it is possible that you may lose your spot.
- There will be prominent signs in the middle of all doorways and entry areas reminding you that you were required to sign up beforehand. If your name does not appear on the posted list at the entrance, you will be required to wait outside the door (or in your car) until the start of service, when we can assess how many free spots remain. Please do your best to respect this process, or else your pastor will begin growing even more gray hairs in his beard. 😊

### **Service changes and hygiene/sanitization information:**

- We will request that exiting after the early service be done efficiently, with no lingering to talk. This is so that we can begin cleaning for the next service as quickly as possible. Similarly, entry for the later service will not be permitted until cleaning is complete. If you want some socially-distanced fellowship time at the church, plan for some time before the early service or after the late service.
- No **childcare** will be offered. This is because any nursery or junior church programs would be impossible without violating social distancing rules. Activity packets will be provided for kids to use in their pews. The nursery space is available if any family needs to use it, but it will be unstaffed.
- The **offering** will be collected not by passing plates, but by dropping donations into our collection jugs beside the sanctuary doors, either before or after the service. Online or mail-in giving is still encouraged as well.
- **Communion** will be offered by having individually-sealed, sanitary packets of juice and communion wafers laid out at the front of the church. At communion time, attenders will come up one by one to pick up a packet and return to their seat, where we will partake together. (Anyone who is physically unable to do this can have a packet brought to them.)
- There will be **no meet-and-greet time**, and we strongly encourage people to forego hugging and shaking hands. People will be expected to **maintain six feet of distance** between one another (except in the case of one’s own household members).

- To enable this social distancing, every other pew will be roped off, and people will be expected to keep distance from one another if sitting in the same pew, unless they belong to the same household.
- Government guidelines ask us to encourage the use of **masks** in areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain, and in particular, upon entering and exiting the service, so we would like you to bring your own along if possible. We will also endeavor to keep some masks on hand to give out, but the supply will be limited, so again, please bring your own.
- **Singing** has been shown to be as dangerous in transmitting viral particles as coughing is, and state guidelines, while leaving the matter to our discretion, urge us to consider not singing at all. We're not yet going quite that far, since singing is fairly essential to worship, and since (as far as we know) there is no community transmission of Covid-19 in Calais. But when we do join together in song, you will be asked to take one of the following measures to decrease the risk: either put on a mask, or sing very quietly (below normal talking volume), hum, or don't sing at all. (The exception will be the worship leaders on stage, who can sing unmasked because of their significant distance from the congregation, as well as any children under 3 years old, for whom masks are not recommended.)
- All high-touch areas of the church will be thoroughly sanitized in advance of both services. Heidi, our custodian, will be doing **sanitization procedures** during each week, ensuring that the church is ready for the first Sunday service. In the period after the early service, a team of volunteers will go around and sanitize again. The roped-off pews will also be switched between services, so that different pews are used for each service.
- Some **doors and windows will be kept propped open**, both to reduce the need to touch handles upon entry or exit, and to increase ventilation in the building, which has been shown to significantly reduce transmission risks. As such, please note that if we have a chilly day or a very warm day, the church may not be able to be heated or cooled as efficiently as usual. Please dress accordingly.
- We will have **hand-sanitizer stations** available at various points around the church.
- There will be no **bulletins** handed out. Also, **hymnals and Bibles will be removed from the pews**, since keeping them there would require us to find ways to sanitize all of them between services. We will be using the projector for all song lyrics and Scripture passages. Please bring your own Bible along as well.
- Since we normally cancel **Sunday School classes, choir, and many of our weekly Bible studies and meetings** for the summer, we will also do that here. Nevertheless, a few meetings might resume, and church boards may meet as needed—please check in with your group leader for that information. The weekly **Bible study/prayer meeting** is going to remain cancelled for now, because the pastor's summer schedule would make it a hit-or-miss proposition anyway, but Pastor Matt will continue to offer a midweek Bible study both online and via mailed CDs. The church's regular Friday **office hours** will resume on June 5.

**Please stay home if any of the following applies to you:**

- If you have any possible **symptoms** of a Covid-19 infection, stay home. This might include any of the following: a new persistent cough, fever, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headaches, or loss of taste or smell.

- We also encourage anyone with major **risk factors** for Covid-19 to consider remaining home. These risk factors include age (the highest risk is for the most elderly, but it is a significant risk factor for anyone 65 and up), diabetes, hypertension, asthma, immune-compromised conditions, or disease of the liver, kidneys, lungs, or heart.
- Further, if you are a resident or worker at a **nursing home or long-term care facility**, please consider not coming to large gatherings such as church services.
- We ask you to use wisdom and discretion in these guidelines. Since we respect the individual's right to make such decisions, the church will not be turning anyone away unless they are clearly showing symptoms of a possible infection. But we do ask you to exercise all necessary caution in these matters.

**In conclusion**, we are excited to resume church services together after having to be apart for so long. We realize that this way of doing church is less than ideal, but at the moment it is the only option available to us, so we will make the most of the opportunity. By following the guidelines above, we have a chance to show love to one another and to our community, as well as showing godly submission to governing authorities in a way that renders praise to God. We greatly appreciate your cooperation and understanding.

How to re-open, and under what rules and conditions, is proving to be a very divisive issue for many churches. We know that you may not like or agree with the way that we're choosing to do this. But please be aware that the Enemy is using this situation to sow discord in many other congregations. Let's be on guard against his schemes, and choose to respond to this situation with love, cooperation, and mutual encouragement. Knowing your hearts, I am confident that your grace, patience, and Christian maturity will show just how deeply the roots of God's grace are planted in the hearts of Second Baptist's members.

These guidelines have been set in place by the Deaconate Board, which has authority for enacting rules and procedures concerning worship services at the church. We are grateful for the diligence and thoughtfulness of all these leaders.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Matt Burden