

CBC,

Our church staff families are very excited to worship in person with you again this Sunday. I want to share with you what we expect our gathering to look like this week and into the near future.

We are attempting to follow CDC and State of Texas guidelines as closely as we can, noting the expertise of these entities as God's common grace given for our protection. We ask for your cooperation - that you put the interests of others above your own. There is a diversity of opinions about every protocol during this time, however the Lord can grant us unity around the gospel and Christ's law of love. There are some things we each must do in this time to limit our own personal freedoms in order to preserve the safety of those most vulnerable to disease. God has vested our church leadership with the responsibility to determine those things for our corporate gatherings.

If you are in the high-risk category (defined by the CDC as ages 65 and older and/or with underlying health conditions), we encourage you to continue staying home and participating with us via livestream for your health and safety, as per our state's recommendation. But if you do decide to attend we will welcome you gladly.

If you or someone in your family is feeling sick or showing symptoms of sickness of any kind, please stay home for the safety of your fellow brothers and sisters. If you have been in proximity of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please avoid any in-person gatherings (whether you are symptomatic or not) until you have been sufficiently quarantined and/or tested negative for the virus.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

According to state and federal guidelines the most important element of "stopping the spread" continues to be social distancing. We have arranged our worship center seats in family "pods." Each family has seats together reserved. Those seats are distanced from other family seating pods. If you are planning to bring guests, please let us know so we can make appropriate seating adjustments.

Once you arrive on Sunday please be mindful of social distancing. Avoid all physical contact (hugs, handshakes, high fives, etc.). We know this will be difficult for many, but large gatherings are where the spread of the virus is most common, and distancing continues to be the greatest deterrent. For parents, this will no doubt require some extra vigilance and coaching of your children. Your kids will likely want to run to their beloved fellow church members for a hug; so talking to them about this before your arrival will be key in helping them understand the need for distance at this time. For those who are usually liberal with hugs and handshakes, this will no doubt require extra restraint. Thank you for loving each other well by holding to this distancing while you are at the CBC facility.

ENTRY PROCEDURE

After you park your car please make your way to the wooden double doors of the worship center. These are located just steps from the double glass doors to the foyer, which will be closed and locked. All families will enter and exit through the wooden double doors, which will be propped open. The doors will not open until 10:30am, however, so no need to arrive early. Ushers will be available to show you to your seats, as well as point you to the hand sanitizing stations where we ask that sanitize your hands upon entry. Please stay mindful of your distance and avoid physical contact. If there are multiple families waiting outside the doors to be seated, two lines will form along the sidewalk under the awning. Families will be able to distance appropriately, moving up each time someone is seated, until reaching the double doors.

MASKS

We do ask that you wear a mask as you enter the worship center. The CDC and state of Texas each continue to recommend wearing face covers to help protect others, especially in large gatherings like ours. The main times we have identified masks to be especially prudent for our gathering are during seating, congregational singing, leaving our seats for any reason, and exiting. After you enter please leave your mask on for the beginning on the service, as we will have a shorter time of congregational singing right at the start. Then we will all be able to remove our masks together for the remainder of the service, until it is time to leave.

Wearing our masks is for added protection of our most vulnerable in a large group setting. Masks lessen the likelihood of people spreading a disease they don't even know they have, and thus provide a loving way that those who are asymptomatic can more effectively keep from spreading the virus to others. According to CDC recommendations, children under the age of 2 should not wear masks. We will have disposable masks available for those who do not have one to bring.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

During the service please make every effort to remain in your seating pod. We have worked hard to arrange the seats as best we can in order to maximize space as well as safety. We ask that you only sit in the seats reserved for you. Please do not attempt to switch seats with anyone or move your chairs. If you do need to get up during the service, please wear your mask any time you are out of your seat.

Our foyer restrooms will be available, but they will be limited to only two persons at a time. Please do not congregate in the foyer area. If you need to take a child out, please proceed outside the building through the double doors you entered through. Please do not enter the Blend Room.

In order to best protect our children and our adult volunteers, we will not have a nursery available. Nor will we be having The Ark for small children.

For the time being there will be no coffee or snacks available, and the water fountain will not be in use. We will not be passing the offering plate, rather there will be a box at the entrance and exit where you may place your offering if desired. You are also welcome to continue giving online or via mail.

At least for the first several gatherings back, our staff and staff families will continue to lead the worship service in song, prayer, and preaching. Lord-willing, we will soon be able to have more up-front participants join us.

DISMISSAL

At the conclusion of the service we will dismiss everyone row by row beginning in the back of the worship center. We ask that you wear a mask until you have exited the building. Once outside please do not congregate in high-traffic areas such as sidewalks.

LOOKING AHEAD

For at least the remainder of the summer we will not be having in-person Sunday schools or Sunday morning Bible studies. The worship service will be our sole in-person gathering. We will also not be opening our facility to any outside gatherings during this time and will forgo Vacation Bible School this year as an added precaution.

Depending on the community spread of the virus and potential spikes in cases in upcoming seasons, we may very well have to scale back our gatherings, whether shrinking the size or temporarily returning to solely live-streaming. Lord-willing that will not be the case, and rather our gatherings will slowly but steadily return to what we were accustomed to before this pandemic. Please have patience with us if we must sometimes take steps backward as often as forward. But we are constantly monitoring the spread of the virus in our city, county, and state. Take heart! Lord-willing, as things improve, we will be able to scale back some of these protocols in the coming months, perhaps even within weeks.

A FINAL WORD

Finally, please do not make your decision about attendance flippantly. No matter your circumstance we want you to be comfortable with the decision you make for yourself and your family. If you are uneasy about our protocols, please feel the freedom to continue staying home for a season. If you are in the higher-risk category, whether for age or medical condition, we welcome you at the service but we also very much understand if wisdom for you right now means avoiding large gatherings like our services. If you have small children that normally would be in the Ark or nursery, we wholeheartedly want you with us in the service! But if the task seems dauntingly overwhelming, please freely stay home. And if you do not fall into any of these categories, please be patient with those who do. Recognize especially that young kids not used to being in the entirety of our service might make some noise, and that's okay!

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to see and worship with so many of you this week, CBC. Will it be different? Yes. But will the fullness of God's grace and the encouragement of His Word be present nonetheless? Absolutely. He is all we need, no matter how we gather.

-Matt