



June 19, 2020

Dear Western Springs Baptist Church,

By now most of you have heard that we plan to gather for worship again at WSBC on July 12. It has been so long since we have been together, and I have missed our worship here in our beautiful sanctuary. I have also missed you, so let's get together!

I wish we could have a big, full service with a full choir and packed pews, but that will have to wait. Things will be different for awhile as we want to wisely and lovingly reopen our church. The plan, as suggested by our Reopen Task Force, will be to have two morning services, scheduled for **9 and 11AM**. There will be an hour between the two in which to sanitize the building.

We are going to ask you to **register in advance** for the service you wish to attend. As you do, you will be asked to answer some health screening questions. When you arrive, your temperature will be taken, and you will be asked to wear a mask, sanitize your hands, and sit in designated areas in the pew. All of this will be strange, but we will see each other, worship together, and then fellowship appropriately outside after the service.

Some things will be missing. We will not have children's ministry, childcare, or nursery. We encourage families to attend at 11AM and, if you are comfortable (we will be), bring your children with you into the service. Another option: we will have a live-stream of the service in the Community Room for families (11AM only). We will not have fellowship time between services in the Community Room. We will not have bulletins, hymnals, handshakes (and hugs), nor will we take up an offering. We will not sing quite as much and more toward the end of the service. (Attached are more detailed guidelines about this from our Task Force.)

All of these measures are being put in place to minimize the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19, so that we can worship together as safely as possible. But we cannot eliminate all risk. That risk is greater for some because of age or health conditions. For some of you the best decision will be to continue to worship at home through our online streaming. Others of you will be wondering why we need to take so many precautions. Please know that we are doing these things out of love so that most of our congregation will be comfortable being back together. Whatever your decision we want to continue to faithfully minister to you during this time.

As we move into this next season, let me encourage you to respond lovingly and humbly toward one another. I know that we each view the dangers of COVID-19 and the limitations of these days differently. We are different in our tolerance of and aversion to risk. We must be careful not to judge someone else who has a different view, or to shame those who respond with a different behavior. So instead of trying to convince our brother of our view or the wisdom of our behavior, we must support one another and encourage one another. And if I love my sister I will be willing to give up my desires for her benefit.

I want to thank Joel Sisson for his leadership of the Reopen Task Force and for the whole group's excellent work. They will continue to meet as we navigate the path toward more normal times together. Pray that this disease will soon be eliminated. But until then God will be faithful! Let's pray that we will learn the lessons he has for us along the way.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Dean