

May 25, 2020

Dear Faith Chapel Family,

We have a firm conviction that God values and wants His people to meet for corporate worship through singing, fellowship, teaching and prayer as Hebrews 10:24-25 says: *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”*²⁵ *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

Thankfully, during the pandemic we’ve been able to do these important aspects of worship while spread out in our various homes through the wonder of the world wide web! I am grateful for Pastor John and his team that have made the online worship services so watchable and a truly meaningful time of worship through song, prayer and preaching. We also fellowship through phone calls, Zoom, and even cards and letters! At the same time, as wonderful and grateful we are for these platforms, we know that being together in-person is the most natural and best way to worship together as God's people.

Enduring the pandemic has been an unprecedented experience. For some it has taken a major toll on emotions, relationships, finances, and spiritual life. For others it’s been much less difficult but still a challenge. Regardless of how we are doing personally we know that worldwide and, in our country, and community, it has caused serious illness and death. We mourn with those who have lost loved ones. We pray for those who are ill. We are praying for a quick end to this pandemic. We pray regularly for our national leaders to make wise decisions to help our country through this time the best way possible. We have and will continue to support all within our congregation and any others who need our help because they are impacted by this personally whether physically, financially, emotionally, spiritually, or relationally.

When it was clear we were facing a public health crisis, we willingly complied with Governor Evers orders and the Central Racine County Health Department and other governmental agencies who desire to decrease the severity and repercussions of Covid-19. God's Word in Romans 13:1, commands us as Christians to cooperate with governing authorities for the public good: *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”* According to the “Safer-at-Home” order churches were deemed essential and allowed to continue ministering to their congregations with certain limitations, which we complied with. We transitioned to online worship services on March 22, had meetings online, and encouraged life groups, and other meetings to observe the rules and guidelines set forth for churches to conduct their ministry. On Wednesday, May 13, the Supreme Court of Wisconsin struck down the “Safer-at-Home” order. This legally brought an end to the period of quarantine. However, that did not mean Covid-19 was gone, nor it’s potential harm.

If the “Safer-at-Home” and “Badger Bounce Back” plans were allowed to continue we would most likely be entering phases 2 and 3 of the “Badger Bounce Back” plan at the end of May throughout June and July based on the most recent guidelines, rules, and orders made by the Governor, health departments and cities throughout Wisconsin. Currently, many businesses and the government buildings are reopening or are planning to soon.

Since this is the case, we believe it is reasonable to return to in-person worship and can be done responsibly for our congregation and community. In-person worship services return on Sunday, May 31st at 9 and 10:45 am. We will do our best to follow the guidelines for worship gatherings from the Central Racine County Health Department and CDC as best as possible to enable us to gather as safely.

The Elders and Pastors and other leaders were praying and seeking God's guidance for how to responsibly return to worship throughout this time of quarantine. **When it became clear we were approaching the time when returning to in-person worship would be a possibilities we met several times over the last few weeks as an Elder Board and with Ministry Team leaders to discuss, pray and develop a plan to return to worship.**

We want to make clear that if you are not ready to return to in-person worship, we support that decision. We know that deciding to return is not an easy choice due to many factors and we do not want anyone to feel compelled to worship in person because we are gathering again in-person. If you are in a vulnerable population or demographic, then not attending in-person worship services may be most wise. If for any reason you are not ready to return, we encourage you to wait until you are. We also want to make clear that there is not one "Christian" response to returning, not returning, being more cautious or not being cautious at all. **I really appreciate what Pastor Chuck Cervenka at Calvary Community Church wrote to his church and I'd like to share it with you because I can't say it any better:**

"As the body of Christ, we need to be careful not to assign maturity in our faith to our response to the virus. Just because one person does not feel as vulnerable does not necessarily mean they have more faith and just because a person is careful and chooses to take precautionary steps, such as wearing a mask, does not mean they do not have faith...Paul reminds us to love each part of the body and to walk with each other in great unity (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12). So, as we begin meeting again, let us make very sure that we are careful to extend great grace to each other, as I am confident you are ready to do!"

We are grateful, excited, and hopeful to worship in-person again! Our prayer is that God will bring us great safety, joy, peace, help and hope as we gather as His people in-person and for those who join us online. We pray God will strengthen our love and trust in Him. We want to express our thanks for His strength to endure the last 10 weeks and we will continue to pray for His guidance and provision to live wisely, safely, and always proclaiming the hope we have in Jesus to our community.

Now for some details.

- **We will live stream the 9 am service on YouTube.**
- **Video of the service will be posted on YouTube early in the week.**
- **We will continue to send out recordings and/or manuscripts of the sermon for those who request them and are unable to return.**
- **Many of our parents desire their children to return to Sunday School (toddlers to Middle school) so Megan Myers, our Children's Ministry Director, and the Sunday School teachers will provide a wonderful morning of fellowship and instruction for them being as safe as possible. We ask that if children are attending Sunday School, they go directly downstairs entering from the side door and be picked up there. Children are welcome to sit with their families.** If you have any questions related to Sunday School, please contact Megan directly at 262-661-9775 or faithchapelchildren@gmail.com. **Megan, our Children's Ministry Director, will continue to provide materials for Sunday school and Melissa will continue to conduct her High School Sunday School class through Zoom on Sunday mornings.**
- There will be no nursery Sunday morning, but the Family Room with a TV will be available for those with infants and toddlers if they wish to use it.

We are making the following changes to facility and worship service to be as safe as possible.

- We will thoroughly clean the church each week between Sundays and clean between each service.
- We removed chairs to limit the amount of people within the sanctuary.
- Water fountains will be turned off.
- There will be no coffee or food for adults.

- If weather permits, we will keep the doors open so there will be no need to touch handles. If the doors must be closed, we will have greeters to open them.
- There will be no paper bulletins, but we will have PowerPoint slides between services of announcements, and we will continue to send announcements and information out via email or snail mail.
- The services will be shorter to allow for cleaning and so that we can transition our congregation between services with limited physical contact.
- We will prepare and offer communion as sanitarily as possible and if you are uncomfortable taking communion, we encourage you not to partake. We will not judge your spiritual maturity because you do or don't take the Lord's Supper.
- Small groups that meet in our facilities are required to clean after they use the building.

We encourage you to do the following things when you come to worship on Sunday.

- **If you or your child(ren) are sick up to two days before church (especially with a fever or undiagnosed illness), please stay home and worship via the live stream or recorded options.** This will limit spreading any infectious disease to our congregation.
- **We encourage older adults or those who are more at risk who wish to join us to attend the first service.** Our facility will be the cleanest then and you will not be exposed to those arriving for the second service.
- **Please attend the same service each week if possible** (This could help to control the spread within our congregation if individuals come down with Covid-19).
- Please sit together as a family and keep spacing between individuals and families that are not related.
- Please greet people with friendly words and smiles rather than handshakes, hugs, or kisses.
- Please try to stay 6 feet apart as you talk and do not congregate in tight groups. If the weather is nice, please converse outside.
- Please sing with us! However, please know that there is likely an increased risk of transmission in doing so. If that concerns you, we encourage you to sit towards the back of the room and/or wear a mask.
- **We do not require masks, but you may wear them if you like and we will have some. Please be gracious and tolerant of each person's decision regarding wearing a mask.**
- Please practice good hygiene such as washing hands often; use hand sanitizer; cough, and sneeze into elbows (not hands); avoid touching face while at church.

We are expectant and happy to be able to see each of you again when you are comfortable joining us for in-person worship! We pray that our time apart has made our hearts grow fonder to be together so that we can share God's love, truth, and compassion with one another!

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Amen."

❖ Ephesians 3:20-21 ❖

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please contact any Elder or pastor.

Grace and Peace,
Faith Chapel Elders, Pastors and Ministry Team Leaders

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