

Dear Ivy Creek Baptist Church Family,

As many of you know, due to the coronavirus pandemic, this coming Lord's Day will mark the seventh week that we will remain apart and worship together online. And while I thank God for the technology that has allowed us to meet together virtually both through the Zoom Sunday school classes and our online worship services, none of that can replace the physical gathering together of God's people. I want you to know that I along with your church staff want nothing more than for us all to be gathered back together again in worship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We have missed all of you desperately and look forward to the time when we can say along with the psalmist, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1).

As you have no doubt been made aware, Governor Brian Kemp announced on Monday, April 20th that while his stated preference is that churches continue meeting online together in order to reduce the potential for spreading the COVID-19 virus, he nevertheless made the allowance for the resumption of in-person worship services so long as the guidelines issued by the state are strictly followed. Among those guidelines are the social distancing requirements of maintaining a minimum of six (6) feet of physical space between non-cohabitating parishioners, prohibiting hand-shaking and other unnecessary person-to-person contact, and providing ample disinfectant stations and sanitation products for those in attendance. As a staff, we are evaluating all of our existing practices and procedures to determine what changes and adjustments must be made in order to be in compliance with these guidelines. Furthermore, we are coordinating to have all carpets cleaned and the entire church campus disinfected.

After prayerful consideration and taking into account all that would need to be accomplished to allow us to meet these guidelines, we have targeted Sunday, May 17th as the day that Ivy Creek can open its doors once again to in-person worship. The number of services we will have, and the times of those services are still yet to be determined, but we will communicate that information to you in the coming weeks. To begin with, and until the guideline restrictions are loosened, we plan to reopen for worship services only. All Sunday school classes should continue to meet together as they have been. Additionally, because of the social distancing guidelines, we will not be able to provide childcare during those worship services. Furthermore, at this point, we are not reinstating any of our Wednesday evening activities. However, please know that as the guidelines are loosened, we will reevaluate when and how we can add other activities back into our regularly scheduled events. This has been, and obviously will continue to be a very fluid situation.

We recognize that because of the threat of the coronavirus, many of you will choose to remain sheltered in place. In fact, if you evaluate yourself to be among the most vulnerable to this virus, or have a suppressed immune system, or have been sick and displaying signs of illness, please stay at home. Be assured that we will continue to livestream our services every week so that you may continue worshiping with us. In fact, we are making some enhancements to our broadcast so that it will be an even better experience.

I have said repeatedly that these are weird and strange days. Stranger still is that none of us know what the new normal will be. I wish that when we reopened our doors, everything would go back to the way it was. While that will not be the case right away, I have every confidence that God has been, and still is in complete control. And the best part of that is that He never changes. Our Lord “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Furthermore, His gospel never changes. It is still “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Therefore, as I have repeated many times throughout my ministry, though our circumstances will certainly change, our confidence is not in our circumstances but in the One who rises high above them and promises to never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

I ask you to continue praying for me and your church staff as we seek to lead through these very challenging times. I ask you to be patient and cooperative with us as we seek to make the best decisions we can for your safety, and that allow us to abide by the guidelines established for us by our governing authorities. Pray that God would give us wisdom and guidance. And certainly, pray that we will be found faithful in our commitment to proclaim the good news of the gospel so that men, women, boys, and girls will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless you and His church.

Pastor Craig