

05/27/20

Dear Hartsville Pike church family,

It's been 2-1/2 months since we last met together for worship. Your Shepherds have been in continual thought and prayer for your faith and welfare. The effects of this virus outbreak have brought about consequences that could hardly be imagined. Many companies and businesses which have shut-down or scaled back are the providers of the many vital goods or services for our nation and our people for their health and general well-being. Children are missing the benefits of the education system; routine learning as well as personal interactions with others in ways that add to their development. Think of the intellectually challenged, the poor, the neglected, the hungry and sick that are not getting the professional help they need! Many of us have been denied the closeness and personal expression of compassion we need when we are sick, hurt or grieving, are lonely or depressed. We pray every day for the Lord to strengthen us that we might not lose faith. We pray He may give us a measure of peace and patience to "Wait upon the Lord."

Your Shepherds have been looking forward to meeting and worshipping once again just as soon as we can. With that in mind, we have been planning for that day so that we will be ready with the appropriate precautions. We covet your prayers and understanding towards this end. Because you have entrusted your spiritual leadership to us, we are keenly aware and humbled by the task before us; for not only has the physical health of the congregation come into play in such a serious matter, but also, we would be engaged in such battle with Satan for your souls! Because our flock has not been able to meet together to be taught, challenged, and encouraged, we ask that each person make an extra effort to seek these things for themselves and remain faithful as Paul reminds us in Phil. 2:12 "...Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ...." This is our most earnest prayer.

As we present our plan for worship, pray for us and realize that we know we are not medical professionals or government officials. We, like you, have to glean from all the information available to us and choose some variation of the many diverse and sometimes contradictory explanations for every aspect given for this pandemic. With that in mind, we seek the counsel of our great and mighty God and pray He gives us wisdom to guide and direct how He would have us lead His people.

We ask that everyone prayerfully read the following introduction to the guidelines for our future worship assembly. It is of utmost importance we are all of one mind as we move forward.

In spite of the variety of opinions and facts, we believe everyone has learned the following about the COVID-19 Virus:

1. It is transmitted from one person to another when an infected person's mouth spray from sneezing, coughing, laughing or talking lands on the mouth, eyes or nose of a well person, then that person has their greatest chance of being infected.
2. The virus can be deposited on furniture, paper, plastic, metal, food, on the floor and any other item or surface. Therefore, if the virus is on any of these items or surface, a non-infected person may get the virus from touching them and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.
3. Keeping your hands washed and/or sanitized (alcohol hand sanitizer lotion) and not touching your face will prevent the spread of the virus from your hands to your mouth, eyes, or nose, which may then result in infection.

With these facts in mind, it is imperative to realize that our own lack of personal precautions can have a serious effect on our brothers and sisters around us. (We really are Our Brothers Keeper.) So also, we request each of us respect the other's feeling and interpretation of their situation.

Philippians 12:3,4 "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

All of law enforcement, government agencies and the medical professionals declare that if you have underlying medical issues and/or are 65 years or older, you are "At Risk" to succumb to the COVID-19 virus if infected. Our age alone can create an "At Risk" environment for the virus because as we age, our immune system weakens. Furthermore, if we have an underlying medical issue, this then adds to our risk.

Typical underlying medical issues at any age, are: Chronic Lung Disease (including Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease COPD and Emphysema), Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Renal (Kidney) Disease, Chronic Liver Disease, Neurologic Disorder and Hypertension (High Blood Pressure).

There are many more suspect underlying medical conditions. Inquire of your physician to determine the level of risk any underlying medical condition may impose for you.

We urge each of you to use the utmost, prayerful consideration and reason when deciding when to return to public worship. Be assured that we will be respectful of anyone who decides at this time not to attend worship. This applies whether you are infected, one of a high risk or do not feel comfortable meeting at this time. As your Shepherds, we are tasked with the personal safety and spiritual wellness of each individual as well as the whole congregation. Each of your Shepherds personally considers this task of no little emotional, physical, or spiritual importance to the Lord's flock. We have a responsibility to lead but not the benefit or freedom to be negligent or remiss in our duties. We consider each of you precious.

We will resume meeting at the building on Sunday, June 7th. There will be only one service at 10:00 AM in the auditorium, as usual. No classes or nursery will be available. A decision will be made about resuming classes and other activities in the coming weeks.

The following guidelines for our future worship service and what you can expect, is as follows:

1. Please park with one parking space between vehicles.
2. Entrance and exit into the auditorium will be at the front glass doors, side glass doors and the back door between the office and the education building. Please exit the door you chose to enter. The doors will be propped open and someone will be there to direct you.
3. Your temperature will be taken utilizing a non-contact thermometer if you want it.
4. Please bring and wear your own face mask as you enter the building. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided for you to keep as a gift from our church sewing ministry. Please bring it with you to use at future services.
5. There will be a table set up with communion cups before you enter the auditorium please take one with you. After use, please leave it in the holder in the pew in front of you.
6. Offering baskets will be located at the entrance doors for your convenience.
7. Hand sanitizer will be available for use at the greeter tables inside the building. Bring your own if you'd like.
8. Drinking fountains will not be available. You may bring your own water bottle.
9. The restrooms available close to the auditorium for use will be limited to one person at a time or one family or helper.
10. Markers will be placed along the auditorium pews, denoting the appropriate 6-foot seating spacing. We will be using every other pew. If you have had routine contact with family or friends, it can be appropriate to sit together with them.
11. We'd like everyone to wear their mask during services and especially while singing. This is when a germ or virus can spread the farthest.
12. Upon completion of the service we ask that you exit a row at a time, like at a wedding, with the front row in the auditorium first, then one row at a time will follow. Ushers will assist.
13. Please reserve socializing to before you enter the building or after you exit.

The following questions will be posted outside each door as you come in:

- ☒ Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- ☒ Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath or sore throat?
- ☒ Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit?
- ☒ Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
- ☒ Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?

We can't thank you enough for your cooperation! I know this seems very intrusive but if all goes well, we can continue to meet and the sooner we will be released of any restrictions. But bear in mind, if something happens, we may be told to fall back into isolation again! God has provided a golden opportunity for us to meet again, Praise be the Name of the Lord!

Thank You and God Bless every one of you,

In Christian Love,

Your Shepherds,

Tom Hughes

Joel Dodson

Gregg Pursley

Phil Smith

Jeff Carnes

Doug Lyle