

June 3, 2020

Dear New Hope Family,

The session met last evening, June 2, 2020 to consider when and how to resume in-person gatherings. We are announcing the resumption of in-person worship for this coming Lord's Day, June 7, 2020 at 10:00 AM. In resuming in-person gatherings we are looking forward to the actions of God's people to be full of grace and warmth towards one another. As we seek the Lord's leading, we want you to have a summary of the policy that we are putting in place.

During this process, we sought to keep a few key theological truths in mind. It is foundational to Christian life and practice that the people of God worship the Lord in public and private within the fellowship of believers (WCF 26.2). This is not limited by any authority in this world. In fact, every authority possesses only what has been given it for His own glory and to the end He has established (WCF 23.1). We establish these policies with the intent that they will equip the people of God to:

- 1) bring Him glory (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 2:17)
- 2) display love of neighbor (Matt 22:37-40; Philippians 2:3)
- 3) discern according to wisdom how to act (Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 16:9; James 1:5)

In these early days of gatherings, we are focusing on minimal physical interaction with one another and minimal elements while we are together. To this end, Sunday school will not be resuming this summer and evening Bible study will remain online. The expectation is that we will not linger inside the building following worship or other gatherings, as much as this is our inclination and desire. We welcome the wearing of a mask, but it will not be a requirement for gathering.

We are looking forward physically gathering again although many things will look different. There will be people wearing masks and those who are not. The sanctuary will be populated by families that are physically distant from one another. Coffee will not be available. There will be no access to church mailboxes. Pew Bibles and hymnals will be removed. We will not be passing out bulletins or song sheets and ask you to print them out at home and bring them with you if you would like. Until we have a policy in place, we will not be celebrating the Lord's Supper together. The library will remain closed and continue the current policy of curbside pickup. Any room that is not in use will be closed and locked. While the bathrooms will remain open, the drinking fountains will be turned off and covered. Anyone who attends is encouraged to bring their own covered water bottles, if so desired.

We ask you, especially in these early days, to RSVP that you will be in attendance to help aid in our planning purposes. You will be receiving a link to RSVP to do this in coming days. When you come, you will enter by using the main, East, doors and exit the building through the North doors, by the handicap parking. These doors will be opened for you. For those that utilize the handicap parking, there will be someone to open the door for you as you enter through the North doors.

During the worship service, we will continue to worship the same unchanging Triune God and witness to the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will continue to join our hearts together in prayer and attend to the preaching of God's Word. We will continue to offer praise to God in song and worship Him in offering. There will be some adjustments in how we do these things. We do encourage the use of masks while singing and acknowledge this may not feel the most natural. There will be a time of greeting, but those physically present will remain in their seating area and greet from a distance. For the collections of offerings, plates will be by the doors at the back of the sanctuary and you can put your offering in as you exit. There will also be no access to the nursery. The cry room will be available for one family unit and there will also be chairs in the narthex if you need to step out. Families should bring whatever items with you that you may need (toys, books, etc.). Families with young children: you know your children better than anyone and we encourage you to discern how you will help them abide by these guidelines, if you choose to be physically present.

As we have stated before, we continue to expect those who have symptoms of illness or are around those that do, those that have severe underlying medical conditions, and those that feel uncomfortable for any reason with joining in person to take part in the livestream option that will be offered each week. We will do our best to encourage the mutual love and care between the body of Christ both physically present and physically distant.

We understand that as time progresses more will be understood about the coronavirus and what the best course of action is. We also understand that situations change, and we are eager to add more elements into the worship service and loosen the physical restraints that we are putting in place. This policy will be reviewed by September 1, 2020 and will be amended sooner if necessary. We welcome your feedback. Talk to your Care Elder or one of the pastors with your thoughts or questions.

There will certainly be a different look and feel on Sunday mornings, which is unavoidable with what we feel are necessary precautions. Please know and be assured that we love you all in Christ. We are the first to acknowledge that all of this is less than ideal. It does point out how we all await Christ's return and his making all things new. Until that day, we cry out 'Come Lord Jesus' while resting on His grace and consider how we can spur one another on to love and good deeds while we wait.

In the love of Christ,

Your New Hope Presbyterian Church Session