

Hello Church,

I am writing to give you an update on reopening our church. I know this time of separation has been difficult for many of us. Preparations have been moving forward for reopening our church and bringing us into compliance with all the state guidelines at this time. We will be reopening July 11. Sabbath school will continue to be online only beginning at 9:30AM-10:20AM. Church will begin at 11AM to give time for people to commute and join the worship service. There are some preparations that you can make to help things go smoothly as we reopen.

Mental Preparation

Worshiping together as a church family will be much easier if we all adjust our expectations about our current church experience. We don't have a lot of control over the COVID-19 outbreak, or state laws pertaining to it, and regardless of how we feel about them, coming together to complain, argue or fight about how we should respond to them will not bring us closer to God or each other. Let us reconcile ourselves to the current situation and come together for the purpose of encouraging each other, for prayer and for bringing our hearts before God in worship together. We have been separated for too long. Let us take advantage of the opportunity to meet and worship, even if under less than ideal circumstances.

I have attached a document that outlines the state guidelines at this time. Please abide by these guidelines if you plan to attend Whipple Creek services. Below are highlights from that document.

1. Self-screen before coming. If your temperature is above 100.4F plan to stay home.
2. Please wear a mask at all times while indoors on church property, or outdoors and not able to maintain 6 ft distancing, unless a medical condition prohibits it.
3. Maintain 6 ft social distancing while on church property (except household units).
4. No physical contact should take place while on church property (except household units).
5. Be willing to use hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes where appropriate.

Please see the attached document for full guidelines. If you are not able to comply with these guidelines because of personal health issues or for other reasons, or if you are personally at risk because of age or a preexisting condition, please continue to join us for worship via live stream. Also consider contacting Carol Singletary to become a part of a small group Bible study. We cannot continue to remain separated and expect our spiritual condition to remain unaltered.

We are a family. We are to love and encourage each other. We do not wear our masks to protect ourselves. We are wearing masks to protect those who may be high risk in our church family who may still want to worship with us in person. Please do not hassle someone who is not wearing a mask (or someone who is), they may have a medical reason for not wearing one. If you are not wearing a mask because of a medical condition, please be extremely respectful of others to maintain 6 ft distancing, as some who come may be a high risk if they contract the virus.

Physical Preparation

1. If you do not already have a mask, please secure one that works for you.

2. Drinking fountains will be shut off. Bring a personal water bottle. There will also be access to some bottled water.

Spiritual Preparation

I believe with COVID-19, police brutality and the violent responses and rioting, we have had a foretaste of darker days that may be in our future. Ellen White's instruction that we should move our families out of the cities seems to be more relevant than ever. Prophecy foretells much more that must take place before the soon return of Jesus, and I believe these events are harbingers of greater things to come. Now is the time to prepare for what is coming upon the world. Our faith needs to be firmly grounded in Christ. Our prayer life must become more active. Our faith must be removed from the things of this world, from entertainment, from temporal comfort, and even trust in human solutions and mankind – including ourselves! Our time and wealth must be redirected to more fully uplift the gospel of Christ before our fellow men. Let us seek the Lord now, while He may be found, that we may have a firm foundation upon which to face the coming days. I highly recommend the 40 days of prayer book and obtaining a daily prayer partner in this preparation. Dennis Smith has many other excellent 40 day books to consider as well.

Closing Comments

I know it is our custom to show our love and affection for each other through touch. I know it will be very difficult for us to be together without wanting to satisfy this impulse. Please do not ask someone if you can hug them, this puts others in a difficult position. We all want to hug each other, but for the sake of those at risk in our community and in compliance with state and Oregon Conference guidelines let us forego this display of our love and affection until a time when we may do so freely.

I am very much looking forward to seeing each of you again in person and worshipping together in our sanctuary as a family.

May God bless His people and give us wisdom as we move forward together,

Pastor Nelson