

Hey Everyone,

First off, let me say thanks so much to all of you who participated in our online survey to feedback on how our church is navigating COVID-19 and to share your perspectives on the potential of reopening for large-group worship gatherings. As a leadership we were thrilled to hear your input. We received over 400 completed surveys and look forward to sharing a number of the survey findings in greater detail through our [“Finding Our Way” podcast](#) release this coming Monday.

When it comes specifically to reopening, almost a quarter of you (at 24%) said you'd like to see us re-open, while almost half (at 49%) requested that we not reopen anytime soon. That leaves 28% of you who remain undecided as to which direction you'd lean at this point.

That feedback confirmed the sense of our leadership's heart, and as a result **we will not be reopening for larger-group public worship gatherings for at least the remainder of 2020**. In a time of great uncertainty, as a leadership, we at least want to provide you with that degree of clarity.

Please appreciate that this is not an easy decision. One of the core functions of the biblical church is its capacity to gather together as a whole community to express worship to and receive teaching from God through His Word. We're eagerly looking forward to gathering together again in the future.

While it's important, though, our primary purpose as a church is not to gather Christians—it's to serve our community. And as a leadership, we feel that the greatest way we can serve our community these days is by helping restrict the spread of COVID-19. We also feel that, were we to reopen, the existing restrictions of maintaining physical distancing, wearing facemasks, offering no singing, no kids' ministry, and no hospitality ministries would fundamentally inhibit our experience of most of the value of gathering in the first place. After all, we don't gather primarily for *content* (we're receiving great content through our online services); we primarily gather for *connection and community*.

So in the meantime, we'd encourage you to leverage as many other aspects of connection and community around our church as possible. In the coming weeks we're inviting Life Groups to explore more socialization and connection opportunities, as well as offering experiences for families and their children to safely connect outdoors. We're also going to launch opportunities for those not yet part of a Life Group to join one—or even to experiment with one for the short-term fall season. For the first of these opportunities, check out our upcoming [“Southridge in the Park”](#) social events.

More importantly, let's remember that we've never believed the Church is *a place you go* but is rather *a people we are to the world around us*. So in this time of unprecedented crisis, let's keep growing in *being the church* to others like never before!

If you have any questions or comments for our leadership, please don't hesitate to drop us a line. We'd love to continue to hear your input and feedback as we continue navigating this pandemic together. We love you and are grateful to be the church together with all of you!

Cheers,

Jeff