



Ephesus Baptist Church

"Pointing Our World to the Eternal Hope!"

**7300 W Old Spring Hope Road
Spring Hope, NC 27882
252.478.3652
www.ebcspringhope.com**

May 26th, 2020 – Coronavirus Update

Dear Ephesus Family,

We are living and ministering in unprecedented times! Obviously the past few months have been challenging, to say the least. Unfortunately, as our nation has faced the rapidly changing landscape caused by the coronavirus (COVID – 19) pandemic, we have had to adjust our lives and sacrifice our gathering together. Like many organizations, we enacted preventative measures to respond in a variety of ways to the challenges of COVID-19.

We all miss being able to gather together and worship our Lord under the comfortable roof of our church building. While we long for the day when we can once again gather together to worship our Lord, we must understand that any decisions that we make are going to be difficult and will require great wisdom and prayerful dependence.

As you probably know by now, Governor Roy Cooper's shelter in place mandate to limit the gathering of churches in NC was overturned by a Federal Judge because of a lawsuit by churches that believed we were having our religious liberties trampled upon. Immediately, many churches began indoor meetings, some implementing safety precautions others, well....not so much.

These days require great wisdom, which I don't claim to have; nonetheless, in many ways this is a cultural issue that requires the utmost diligence and caution. When dealing with cultural issues my grandmother always told me, *"if others want to jump off a bridge does that mean you need to jump off too?"* I am going to rephrase that

by saying this, “*simply having the right to gather and worship by Law doesn’t always mean it is the right thing to do.*” Therefore, after discussing the issue with our Deacons and Deacon Care Team Leaders last week, the consensus was that we should err on the side of caution with any plan to move forward. The next page contains the plan we will follow for our safe regathering. First, allow me to say this.

Our plan is built around the “**one another**” principle that leads us to be concerned and helpful to those who feel they are at risk and are experiencing anxiety and fear. I understand that everyone doesn’t feel that way, so our plan is going to seek to provide options for you as well. We want to emphasize that we are not fearful or afraid. Our God is sovereign and in control. COVID-19 did not catch Him off guard.

Therefore, we understand that this is not a doctrinal or moral decision but a "health and safety" decision based on the recommendations from our Baptist State Convention and Government agencies such as the CDC and our NCDHHS. Remember, Jesus healed on the Sabbath, so it should be seen as an act of mercy that we seek to prevent disease on a Sunday. We have many elderly members and members with compromised immune systems that we should seek to love and protect. You can read our plan on the next page.

As we move forward, I plan to work with our Deacon Leadership, and our ReVision Team members to develop new guidelines and safety protocols to lead our ministry into the future safely. Please continue to pray for one another, look out for one another, and encourage one another. I simply ask that you exercise patience, love, and unity during this difficult time!

Joyfully His,

Pastor Wayne

Ephesus Baptist Church

Four Stages for Safe Regathering

Our plan consists of four stages that we hope will allow sufficient safety and efficient ministry during the remainder of the pandemic. There is an infographic at the end of this document that can help you see the stages visually, but more information is provided below for each stage.

Stage One

Stage one is where we currently find ourselves. We will seek to do the following until June 1st, 2020.

- Online worship only.
- Zoom meetings only (with exception of Church Staff).
- No Food Allowed.
- No Choir Practice.
- No Sunday School in building. Online only.
- No Children's Ministry in building. Online only.
- No events held inside our church building.
- Buildings and Grounds Committee will begin to work with the Church Staff to prepare our building for regathering. This will include: regular maintenance, cleaning, and minor safety updates.

So basically, things will continue online through next Sunday. After that we will enter into **Stage Two** which will bring several new changes to how we temporarily function.

Ephesus Baptist Church

Four Stages for Safe Regathering

Stage Two

Stage Two will begin on June 1st, 2020 and continue until at least July 1st, 2020. This is what it entails:

- Pastor Wayne has secured an FM Radio Transmitter which means that we will begin hosting Drive-in style worship services on Sunday Mornings only (No Wednesday Gathered Service. Here is what you need to know:
 - Due to heat, we will begin our service at 10AM and strive to limit the service to between 45–50 minutes.
 - Fellowship Hall Bathrooms will be open in case of emergency.
 - We ask that you either stay in your car and tune to the radio station that will be provided at a later date or you can sit in the shade in your personal chair and listen along, but we ask that you keep socially distanced and wear a mask if you choose to talk with others. Please bring water to stay hydrated!
- We will continue to provide an online worship experience to those who feel uncomfortable leaving home.
- Zoom meetings will continue (**We strongly encourage utilizing Zoom for small group interaction and Bible study/prayer**).
- Meetings of 10 or less can begin in the building provided face mask are worn and social distancing maintained.
- No Food Allowed.
- No Choir Practice.
- No Sunday School in building. Online Only.
- No Children's Ministry in building. Online Only.
- No events other than Funerals or Weddings (*w/ limitations*).
- Buildings and Grounds Committee will continue to work with the Church Staff to prepare our building for regathering.

Ephesus Baptist Church

Four Stages for Safe Regathering

Stage Three

Stage Three will begin at a TBD date. We will move to Stage Three after evaluating the current course of the pandemic and determining whether it is safe to resume indoor gatherings. Things to know about Stage Three:

- Indoor services will resume with face mask recommended and social distancing required.
- We may make use of multiple services depending on the need in an effort to maintain social distancing, but we will strive to keep everyone together in one service if possible.
- While we will have music, we will refrain from experiencing choir and may forego congregational singing per CDC recommendations (*More research and prayer is needed here*).
- Bathrooms will be available for use one person at a time, with a few disinfecting procedures implemented.
- New protocols for Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- We will continue to provide an online worship experience to those who feel uncomfortable leaving home.
- Zoom meetings will continue (**We strongly encourage utilizing Zoom for small group interaction and Bible study/prayer**).
- Meetings of 10 or less will continue in the building provided face mask are worn and social distancing maintained.
- No Food Allowed.
- No Choir Practice.
- No Sunday School...Well, no, small group S.S. in the building. We are going to offer a S.S option in the Fellowship Hall for a gathered group. (*More information later*)
- No Children's Ministry in building. Online only.
- No events other than Funerals or Weddings (*w/ limitations*).

Ephesus Baptist Church

Four Stages for Safe Regathering

Stage Four

Stage Four will begin at a TBD date. We will move to Stage Four after evaluating the current course of the pandemic and determining whether it is safe to resume unrestricted indoor gatherings, i.e. when God removes the COVID-19 threat. Things to consider for Stage Four:

- It must be understood that moving forward will look different than what we were used to.
- Church will be more meaningful to us because we will better understand the privilege it is! Maybe that is what God is teaching us.
- We will continue to host online services and increase our online ministry in the future in hopes of ministering to our community better.
- Zoom meetings will be an option for future meetings due to busy schedules and seeking to offer a better ministry to life balance.
- Normal meetings will resume.
- Food will be allowed with safety protocols in place.
- Choir will resume.
- Sunday School / small groups will move forward full speed ahead.
- Children's Ministry will resume.
- Events will begin to be scheduled with new protocols in place.
- We will do a better job of being the church in the days ahead as God revives our hearts and revitalizes our ministry.
- If we prepare ourselves now, God will use us in mighty ways in the future.

EPHESUS BAPTIST CHURCH

FOUR STAGES FOR SAFE REGATHERING

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
<p><u>WHAT TO EXPECT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES. • ZOOM MEETINGS ONLY. • BUILDING PREPARATION BEGINS FOR REGATHERING. • NO FOOD ALLOWED. • NO CHOIR PRACTICE. • NO SUNDAY SCHOOL. • NO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY. 	<p><u>WHAT TO EXPECT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONLINE WORSHIP PLUS DRIVE-IN SERVICES. • MEETINGS OF 10 OR LESS WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING AND FACE MASKS. • BUILDING PREPARATION CONTINUES. • NO FOOD ALLOWED. • NO CHOIR PRACTICE. • NO SUNDAY SCHOOL. • NO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY. 	<p><u>WHAT TO EXPECT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INDOOR SERVICES WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING AND FACEMASKS PLUS ONLINE. • MEETINGS OF 10 OR LESS WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING AND FACE MASKS. • NO FOOD ALLOWED. • NO CHOIR OR CONGREGATIONAL MUSIC. • NO SUNDAY SCHOOL. • NO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY. 	<p><u>WHAT TO EXPECT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INDOOR SERVICES WITH NEW SAFETY GUIDELINES. • NORMAL MEETINGS • FOOD ALLOWED. • CONGREGATIONAL AND CHOIR MUSIC RESUME. • SUNDAY SCHOOL. • CHILDREN'S MINISTRY • CELEBRATION SERVICE • EVENTS RESUME

UNTIL MAY 31ST

AT LEAST UNTIL JULY 1ST

TBD

TBD