

May 15, 2020

You probably know that Wisconsin's Supreme Court has overturned the states "Safer at Home" guidelines this week. And all of us are looking forward to meeting together again for worship – soon! For Living Hope, "soon" will not be this Sunday, May 17. Beyond that we haven't yet set a specific date when we will resume public worship. This letter explains some of our thoughts.

While the legal requirements of the previous "Safer at Home" order are not currently in place, it is likely that they will be replaced by a new set of regulations, whether on a state, county or local level. Until "what's next" becomes clear, we will not make major changes in our approach.

Apart from any legal requirements, there are still other guidelines and recommendations from both medical and governmental authorities concerning things like social distancing practices and group size. While those guidelines and recommendations may not carry the force of law, following them, as long as they do not directly cause us to disobey God, is a demonstration of our love for each other and our community. Our testimony within the community could be compromised by acting in a way that puts ourselves and others at risk.

As I have been talking with other pastors and church leaders, the unanimous consensus is that our churches should follow a cautious path toward reopening. Now we're all trying to figure out exactly what that looks like.

At Living Hope, we know that some of us are ready to begin meeting without any restrictions - **now**, and that others have legitimate reasons for being more cautious. As a body of believers we are called to "be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). In our current environment, those of us who feel comfortable meeting with few precautions will need to limit our own freedom because our actions affect others - in our church and in the community.

Our elders understand that we can never guarantee absolute safety, and we are committed to resuming public worship as soon as we can with confidence that we are providing as safe an environment as we can. We will continue to communicate as our plans and our timeline become more definite. Here is some of what it might look like when we do resume public worship:

- two worship times to allow smaller numbers; probably 9:00 and 10:30
- worship service only to begin with; no Sunday School or other groups
- no nursery or children's church to begin with
- continue "social distancing" and limit indoor visiting
- continue online video for those who choose not to return right away

Please continue to pray for each other, and for the timing of our return to public worship!

Because He is faithful,  
Pastor Steve