



good shepherd
presbyterian church

May 18, 2020

Dear Good Shepherd family,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! I hope you are finding ways to connect with others and with the Lord during this challenging time. I am writing with an update on church activities; we will follow with a financial update Wednesday morning. It's long, but I'd ask you to read through to the end.

The Session met by Zoom on May 12 for our regular monthly meeting. One of our primary topics of discussion was the question of timing around resuming in-person activities at Good Shepherd. While there are many facets to consider, discussion focused around two topics: TIMING and PREPARATION.

1. TIMING

Our church is a witness to many people in our community and we have a responsibility to set direction and care for anyone who uses our facility. Since many community groups also use our facility, we are respecting and aligning our re-opening based on the state's phased approach, even in light of the recent ruling that NC churches do not have to follow the restrictions in gathering. On May 8 the State of NC moved from a stay-at-home order to Phase One of a plan to lift restrictions. Phase One is in effect until May 22, but will not move to Phase Two unless certain criteria are met. Phase Two is to be implemented *for at least four to six weeks*, again requiring certain criteria to be met before moving to the less restrictive Phase Three.

As restrictions begin to lift and wisdom allows, **we hope to begin to resume smaller in-person gatherings and activities**. One such that the Session already approved was resumption of the community garden. It meets outside and does not involve more than a handful of people at one time. Look for an invitation soon from Shannon Klar to get a garden plot or resume activities there. We hope to continue resuming additional activities in due time, with in-person worship probably being the culmination as it involves the most people in the closest proximity. We are creatively preparing for that joyful day! In the meantime, we welcome your encouragement, your participation, your financial support, and your prayers!

A note on worship: while there are versions of gathered worship *possible* in each phase (e.g. worshipping in cars on the GSPC ball field), we are choosing at this time to continue with online worship services because of what they offer in terms of participation level, content, access, and effectiveness. As we move toward a return to in-person worship, the Session will evaluate various worship alternatives.

Additionally, the state is not our only source of guidance: scripture teaches us to not look for legal loopholes, but to seek what is good, builds up, and benefits one another - something may be "permissible... but not everything is beneficial... not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his or her own good, but the good of others." (1 Corinthians 10:23-24) Based on the best-case (fastest) scenario envisioned by the state and guided by what we believe to be beneficial, constructive, and focused on care of one another, **we do not plan to resume in-person worship before the end of June**. The session will continue to monitor health and safety guidelines as well as seek what we believe to be the best option for our church and neighbors and will re-visit our timeline at the June 9th session meeting and update the congregation. Our strong desire is to resume, but we want to do so with all wise precautions in place and at the right time as instructed by available information and biblical principles.

2. PREPARATION

In addition to the question of *when* to resume various activities, we want to ask the question of *how* and to be prepared to re-gather wisely. We want to be prepared with hand-sanitizer, a regularly and diligently cleaned facility, adequate spacing and ventilation, face masks, and anything else we can do to be responsible members of our community. As regards worship, we need to modify our liturgies and practices, such as those around handling objects (bulletins, offering plates, communion wares) and interacting with each other (greetings, singing, etc...).

In short, we have a lot of work to do to get ready in addition to answering 'when'. To that end, the Session is forming a task force to work on the logistics and preparation. Several elders have volunteered and they will be drawing in and drawing upon expertise inside and outside the church to have us ready to go when the time is right. If you'd like to participate in this effort, please contact Mark Katibah (mark.katibah@gmail.com).

ONGOING MINISTRY AND MISSION: YES!

Finally, I want to encourage you that **worship, ministry, and mission have not stopped!** We continue with what I hope are meaningful experiences of worship online. Eric and Zach have really stepped up to think of creative ways to continue in their ministry areas as well as offer online resources to the whole congregation. Melissa has been in regular contact with the preschool families, offering educational resources to parents for their young children. Groups like the deacons and prayer ministry and adult Sunday school classes have resumed meeting online. Volunteers are coming out to care for the church grounds and the prayer ministry has already begun engaging in a prayer walk and outreach ministry to the neighborhoods around the church.

I'd challenge you to use this time to see who God is putting in your path:

- **Is there someone in your neighborhood who is on your mind that you should contact?**
- **Do you know someone who is graduating without a ceremony that you can send card, post a message, etc. to acknowledge their accomplishment?**
- **If you plan to go to the grocery store, is there an elderly or at-risk person you should call to see if you can pick something up for them?**
- **Has God whispered someone's name to you that you can check-on or do something for?**
- **Is there a member of our church you could call to see how they are doing?**

If you say 'yes' to any of these questions (or already have), we would *love* to hear about it and share the stories with the congregation as encouragement. Or if you'd like to be involved and don't know how, please let your deacon know or contact me directly (704-575-6529 or robert@gspc.net) - I'd love to hear from you!

In Christian love,



ONLINE RESOURCES/LINKS

If you have access to the Internet, these links will help you get to church and community information. Some folks have asked me what the bit.ly means in the links... that is a standard URL-shortener which allows for a short link rather than a very long one... it is safe when coming from a trusted source – like your church! It is not necessary to type ‘www’ or ‘http:’ in a web address – you CAN, or can just use what’s listed below.

Good Shepherd Website	gspc.net
GSPC Facebook Group (‘live’ service Sun 9am, 11am)	bit.ly/GSPCfacebook
GSPC YouTube Channel (archived services)	bit.ly/GSPCyoutube
Online Giving (credit or electronic fund transfer)	bit.ly/GSPC-giving

You may also use our secure P.O. Box for checks
(Good Shepherd Pres. Ch., P.O. Box 78175, Charlotte, NC 28271)

To be added to the e-mail prayer list or
the Voice newsletter distribution, please reach out to
Joni Bailey at admin@gspc.net or 704-364-1234

COVID-19 GSPC-related Updates	gspc.net/covid-19
Center for Disease Control (CDC)	bit.ly/CDCgeneralCOVID19
NC Health/Human services	bit.ly/NCHHScovid19updates

If there is anything you need or ideas you want to share, please let Robert know! We believe spiritual care is extra-important in a time of fear and risk. So we want to **be the church fully “on” and at our best for one another and for our community.** Thank you for being a part of THIS special church family.

****Further updates will be posted at gspc.net, e-mailed, or sent by mail. We will take special care to share any critical information with those without Internet access.***