



5/14/2020

Dear SBT Family,

I can't begin to say how much Dyna and I have missed seeing and being with our church family through this COVID outbreak and resulting shutdown. Through it all I've tried to be thankful: thankful for no known COVID cases in our church family, thankful for a livestream that was in place and that has served us well, thankful for a church that is so special that we miss it so much.

For the last eight weeks the questions I've been asked the most are "How much longer" and "When do we start back." Reopening has been on all of our hearts. BY HIS GRACE I was able to announce in last night's service that, at long last, **It is Time!**

SUMTER BAPTIST TEMPLE WILL **REOPEN FOR IN-PERSON SERVICES ON SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2020!**

The purpose of this letter is to give you information on what to expect if you choose to attend this Sunday. **PLEASE read this carefully and in its entirety.** This will be a phased reopening, and these early weeks will look and be much different than usual. We've tried to make sure you have all the information you will need to decide if you should come to services yet and what to expect when you get here.

Just before we jump into this sea of information, I want send three important messages to our church family.

1. We understand that, just as we have had to make a prayerful decision about reopening, you have to make a prayerful decision about returning. We understand that everyone cannot and should not return at the same time. Reopening **does not** necessarily mean we expect you to come. It means we are giving you the **opportunity** to come when you are ready. We strongly encourage our seniors and those with pre-existing medical conditions to be very cautious in their decision making.

2. We need to be true to our theme, by His Grace, as we return. Let's live God's grace by being respectful of others. No one's spirituality or dedication should be judged based on when they return to church or what precautions they do or don't take in returning and in their personal lives. We also ask that you live His grace by working with us through the phases of this reopening. None of us will like having to do things the way we have to do them right now, but with God's grace we can and will work through it.

3. I want to thank you for your patience, love, encouragement, and prayers through these weeks of uncertainty and frustration. I am blessed beyond measure, and I, our staff, and our leadership team have been blessed and encouraged by your support. Now, **Let's Do This!**

The Plan

We will only be reopening our public services at this point. The normal schedule will not change for evening services, but pay special attention to the plan for Sunday mornings. Due to potential crowd size and the need for physical distancing we will be having **TWO SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES.**

Sunday Morning-	9:15am-	50 years old and above
	11:00am-	49 years old and under

NOTE- We understand that some families will have adults in both age groups. In that case you may use your discretion as to which service you choose to attend. All families with children and teens accompanying them are asked to attend the 11:00am service. Individuals under 50 who are at risk due to medical conditions may be able to attend the early service as well. If you have questions or concerns about which service to attend please contact the church office and we will help you.

Sunday Evening-	6:00pm-	One combined service.
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Wednesday Evening-	6:30pm-	One combined service.
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There will be no Sunday School or Children's ministries at this time. These will restart eventually, and announcements will be made as the time approaches to restart these ministries. There will also be no nurseries open at this point. The Auditorium and Foyer will be the only part of our building that will be open.

Parking, Entry, and Exit

9:15 AM Sunday service will use only the North (Alice Drive) parking lot. Entry will be through the foyer entrance on the same side. The Harper Street parking lot and entrance will be closed for this service time.

11:00 AM Sunday service will use the South (Harper Street) parking lot. Entry will be through the foyer entrance on the Harper Street side. The Alice Drive parking lot and entrance will be closed for this service time.

6:00 PM Sunday service, and 6:30 PM Wednesday services will use only the North (Alice Drive) parking lot. Entry will be through the foyer entrance on the same side. The Harper Street parking lot and entrance will be closed during these services.

Dismissal from all services will be handled row by row with the ushers assisting and maintaining distancing as much as possible.

9:15 AM service dismissal will use both the exit at the right front of the auditorium as well as the exit at the rear of the auditorium. The 11:00 AM service and evening services will use only rear exit.

Precautions

We are taking a number of precautions with your safety and the safety of our community in mind.

1. If you are sick please wait until you are well regardless of whether you think it is COVID related illness or not. If you have tested positive for COVID 19 or are awaiting test results for the virus, please do not come to services until you are medically cleared, officially recovered, and free from quarantine. Anyone with a fever or COVID type symptoms will not knowingly be allowed to enter the building. PLEASE do not cut corners or think you are an exception. The livestream is available for you until you are well and symptom free. We simply cannot take chances in the current environment.
2. Breathing masks are optional and welcome if you desire to wear one. Feel free to bring yours with you. We will also have a supply of masks and rubber gloves that will be made available to you before you enter the building if you need them.
3. Anyone passing out any items to you will be wearing a breathing mask and gloves for your assurance and protection.
4. As you approach and enter the building orange cones will be used to stage and distance family groups as they wait to be seated. Please follow their guidance as they serve you.
5. Ushers will seat people and families maintaining six feet between families or individuals. As a rule of thumb, we will generally only be able to seat up to 4 people per pew and still maintain distancing. The obvious exception to that would be families of more than four seated together.
6. We respectfully ask once you are seated that you remain seated (except in case of emergency) until dismissal at the end of the service. We cannot ensure physical distancing if people are moving about the room.
7. Please understand that any fellowship must be limited, take place outside, and remain physically distanced (6 feet away from people outside your family). We cannot afford to be observed violating recommended distancing protocols if we want to continue to meet without government interference. Please be vigilant and helpful in this area regardless of your own personal feelings about whether it is necessary or helpful.

8. Restrooms will be available for EMERGENCY use only. Please plan to avoid needing to use them if possible. To assist with this, our services will be shorter than normal. Our goal is to keep the services to 1 hour long. Water fountains will be turned off and unavailable for use as well.

9. Contact surfaces will be wiped down as well as restrooms cleaned and sanitized between the two AM services and prior to evening services.

10. We ask that you maintain distancing and refrain from ALL physical contact with anyone outside your family while on church property. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this.

11. Offering plates will be posted at the Auditorium exits, doors will be propped open, and hymn lyrics will be posted on the screens so hymnals are not needed. We will also not be passing out bulletins in this beginning phase of reopening. These measures will limit contact surface touches.

12. We will have hand sanitizer available before you enter the building. Whether you bring and use your own or use ours, we ask that you use some just before entering the building.

These arrangements are where we start. We will work our way back to normal, and announcements will be made as future changes warrant. Our staff, deacons, and volunteers are working hard to make our reopening a pleasant and safe experience. Please pray that God will bless and empower the services. Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperative spirit.

By His Grace,

Mike Westmoreland
Pastor