Dear church family,

The moment has arrived — it is time to reopen our church. Praise the Lord! Buffalo church leaders met last night and formulated a plan to begin the process of returning to in-person worship and Bible studies. Much like the rest of the world, we are easing into this process in order to ensure that when we meet, we are able to do so safely. Here’s where we are at the present time with regard to resuming worship:

* **Our** **first in-person worship service will take place****on June 7, 2020 at 10:30am**. That gives us two weeks to clean thoroughly and make the necessary preparations. *There will be no Sunday School at least through the month of June.*
* **Many of you will perhaps want to wait before you return to in-person worship.**This is a personal decision between you and the Lord, and if you choose to stay home, we will respect and honor that decision. *No one should be made to feel that they lack faith or biblical courage for choosing to delay their return to church.*
* **June 7****, our first Sunday back, will also serve as our graduate recognition service**! We want to recognize and present each graduate with a gift,*regardless of the graduate’s age.*If you want your child/grandchild to be recognized, contact Matthew Waller ASAP (mwaller1581@gmail.com).
* **Our first****Sunday evening****and****Wednesday evening****Bible studies** **will begin the same day/week.** The first Sunday evening Bible study will be June 7 at 6pm, and the first Wednesday Bible study will be June 10 at 7pm. Both of these studies will take place in the sanctuary. *Youth and children Bible studies will resume at the same time. Matthew will soon send out more specific information.*
* **There will be no nursery for now**, but the nursery will be open and cleaned for anyone who needs to use the changing tables or rocking chairs for their little ones.
* **Live-streaming of our services and Bible studies**will continue for anyone who chooses not to return at the present time.
* **We will revisit this plan at the end of Jun**e. Our prayer is that we will be in a position at that time to expand things a bit more, but we will communicate those plans to you as we make them.

Though we are returning, things will be a bit different for the time being. We trust God to honor our decision to reopen, and we trust His protection when we do so! But such faith does not rule out taking precautions to avoid making our church a COVID19 hot-spot. Your leaders have committed to take every possible precaution to prevent this, including observing and implementing CDC guidelines for churches wherever possible and reasonable. Here’s where we are the present time with regard to our efforts at keeping one another safe:

* Our **cleaning teams will be trained** on cleaning in an age of COVID19, and the areas in the church that will be used on the first Sunday will be throroughly cleaned before you arrive.
* We will also **clean after each service**, and all areas of the church that we do not intend to use for now will be closed off.
* We will **space out seating in the sanctuary** to ensure that individuals and family units are able to sit far enough apart to enable social distancing. Hand sanitizer will be readily available in multiple locations. Masks will be provided and you are strongly encouraged to wear them, especially if you are at-risk.
* We will **avoid shaking hands and hugging one another.**Moreover**,**the best place for extended socializing, at this point, will be in the parking due to the relative safety of the open air. This will be hard, because we miss one another. Some of us might not sense any danger in doing so, but others will. “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).
* **There will be no paper bulletins**, only electronic ones sent out by email.
* **If you are sick or have been sick with cold and flu symptoms**, or have had a fever, we ask that you wait at least 72 hours after the fever goes away to come to church.

Youth and children’s activities will also resume beginning June 7, although most of them will look different from normal. In the next few days, Matthew Waller will be communicating with you about what these plans are.

Many of the events we had planned for this spring and summer were initially cancelled, such as WMU activities, VBS, youth/children’s activities and outreaches, etc. Now that we are on the other side of the quarantine, it is time to begin prayerfully revisiting these plans to see whether and how we can modify them in such a way as to still be able to have them. Stay tuned for more communication in the future on these plans.

In His goodness, God has used this time to teach us many things, one of which is the simple goodness of being able to be together, in person, as a church family. While the church is not the building but the people, nevertheless we were intended to be together, and God blesses His church when they gather to worship Him. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

I am so thankful, though, for how each of you have continued to function as a church body even though we haven’t been able to meet in our building. Many of you have ministered to our seniors and homebound through phone calls, cards, and delivering food. Others have worked hard to revive our food bank, and it is alive and well. The rest of you have been actively engaged in our online Bible studies and have continued to endure my stick figure drawings, which is no easy feat. :)

I know God has great things in store for His church, because nothing can thwart Him and His good plans for His people! “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11). I am so thankful for each of you, and I count it a tremendous privilege to be your pastor.

Dustin

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Rev. Dustin Mace

Senior Pastor, Buffalo Baptist Church

Liaison, BSCNC Committee on Nominations

108 Buffalo Church Rd. Shelby, 28150

704.482.4526 office

919.671.9615 cell

dustinmace@gmail.com