

May 21, 2020

Dear FPC Family,

I wanted to send you an update as we work to determine when and how to resume in-person gatherings as a church family. At session meeting on Monday, May 18, resuming worship was a key topic. We did not set a date to resume and we did agree that it was best to wait at least a few more weeks. However, there's much more that we want you to understand and include in your prayers.

The logistical details of gathering are challenging--how to maintain social distance and limit crowd size, whether or not to require masks, [to sing or not to sing](#), what to do with children, the risks that "passing the plate" and conducting communion and baptisms pose, and so on. And as a body we undoubtedly hold a variety of convictions on how and when it is best to gather in person again.

It is my prayer that we move forward in unity as a church with a renewed sense of purpose in our mission. We are currently reading through the book of Acts in which the grace and power of the Holy Spirit is obvious. The same Holy Spirit is working to unify us, to challenge us and to empower us to be and act in ways that seek the welfare of our community and care for those who are most vulnerable and in need.

In a [recent article](#) about this season we find ourselves in, Brett McCracken called for the church to live into several distinctives: sacrifice, humility, and patience. Each one goes counter to our culture. For example, someone might find it difficult – even upsetting – to have to wear a mask and stay 6 feet from everyone at all times. You might think these precautions are a needless overcorrection. Can you sacrifice your ideal for a season, out of love for others who believe the precautions are necessary? Likewise, those who think the lockdowns are necessary and the precautions essential, can you refrain from passing judgment on those who question the ongoing restrictions? The posture of sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) is critical for followers of Jesus and undergirds all the commands about "not passing judgment" and being careful that our "freedom does not become a stumbling block" to others (Romans 14:13, 1 Cor. 8:9). We are all trying to do the best we can in this unprecedented moment. Let's model Christlike humility (Phil 2:3) and patience (a fruit of the Spirit – Gal. 5:22). Paul voiced it well, "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love . . ." (Eph. 4:1-3)

The reopening process is "clunky" and complex. We are eager and do not want to neglect meeting together (Heb. 10:25). We are also called to give special attention to those who are most vulnerable among us (Matt 25:14ff) and to love our neighbors (Luke 10:19ff). We look forward to the day when we gather together, and until then, we covet your prayers and your patience. We are so grateful for your sacrifice!

Grace and Peace!

Steve

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