

September 2, 2020

Dear Church Family,

We find ourselves living in a challenging season. All around us are divisions and arguments over the upcoming election, racial strife, and a novel virus that – as of this week – has infected over 5.5 million Americans and claimed the lives of 180,000 more. There is no shortage of opinions on all that is happening, even within our own church. In such uncertain times, we find ourselves asking difficult questions.

Regarding the virus, we have consistently said two things: 1) We must trust God and not be overly fearful, and 2) We must act in the way of love to protect the vulnerable. Over the past six months, we seen how there are many people beyond those who contract the virus who are in need. Some who have lost jobs, some are deferring important medical care, and some who've been left to battle loneliness, addiction, anxiety, or depression in total isolation. We appreciate the concern that our local and state leaders have shown in attempting to protect the physically vulnerable among us, and we're also grateful for their decision to allow churches the latitude to determine how best to care for and meet the needs of our spiritual families.

With this in mind, we believe it is time for our church to begin preparing for in-person worship gatherings once again. Barring significant changes in our local infection numbers, we plan to have our first gathering at the church building on **Sunday, October 4th**. Our services will continue to be livestreamed for all those wishing to stay home. In the coming weeks we will be sharing with you the many precautions we are taking to keep people safe.

As you can imagine, the opinions on when and how we should reconvene for in-person gatherings are as diverse among our church members as they are in the wider culture around us. It is our desire, however, to model a different path at PR than to be drawn into the divisive rhetoric that has become so commonplace. It is a path based upon the principles of Christ-like love and godly respect for such personal perspectives as described in Romans 14. Paul encourages the diverse body of Christ in Rome to accept one another "without quarreling over disputable matters" (v. 1). He recognizes their varying opinions but encourages the believers not to look down upon or be judgmental toward their brother or sister (vv. 2-10). Instead, Paul exhorts them: "Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (v. 19, NIV). We cannot allow our differences of opinion to divide and destroy the uniting work of God in the body of Christ.

We believe it is good to join in church gatherings and relationships keeping one's personal health concerns in mind, while modeling reasonable social distancing policies. We also believe it is equally good for people to stay home and watch online. And we are committed to unity in the church, to respecting those with differing views, and to providing the best options we can for every individual and family. *Will you join us in embodying a Romans 14 posture?*

We'll communicate in the weeks ahead the many precautions we are taking to keep everyone safe. We ask that everyone respect the decisions and convictions of those with whom they disagree, and that we love each other well.

For the Leadership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt E. Haynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.