

# HOMEFRONT CHURCH

September 17, 2020

Dear HomeFront Family,

What a year it has been! All of us have been trying to get used to the changing conditions and unprecedented events of 2020. Many times, when it seems we have just figured it out, something disrupts the plans we have made. When I look at how all of you have responded to these circumstances, I am proud of our church family. Many times, I have seen you step up and love others in our church and community. Your understanding of the needs of others has shone through in the way you seek to love and understand each other. This has been especially evident during our Sunday morning and small group gatherings. I have also been encouraged by the determination and steps many have taken to become more like Jesus. God's grace has been sufficient for his people.

As you know, the Elders of our church have been praying and seeking God's will for the best ways to gather for worship and ministry during the unfolding conditions the pandemic has created. During this time, the Leader Board has spent hours reading Scripture and in prayer over our church family. It has been our goal to continue to provide opportunities for people to take their next steps in maturity in Christ. While pursuing this maturity, the Elders have focused on ministry, gathering, and unity as the three key components in their decision making.

**First**, we want to see the ministry and worship of our church family continue to take place. In Hebrews 10:24-25, we are told to gather in order to spur each other on toward love and good deeds and to encourage one another through regular gatherings. In all times and situations, we as the body of Christ need to find ways to worship and work together in order to glorify God and live like Jesus. In the past months we have done this by holding outdoor worship gatherings, small groups who are digging into Scripture together, youth group gatherings, backyard children's ministries, and a camping trip. We have also been able to host blood drives, take a food collection for Love INC, and provide financially for our church family. Through these activities, our church has been able to encourage each other in faith and take part in loving deeds for those in need.

**Secondly**, we are committed to meeting in ways that allow as many people to gather safely as possible. It is important that we gather in ways that let us worship, pray, challenge, and encourage each other in our spiritual growth. The Psalms remind us 10 different times to praise and acknowledge God in the assembly of believers. In one of his letters to the Ephesians, Paul instructs us that we are to build up the body of Christ (the church) by equipping each other to be more like Jesus (Ephesians 4:11-13). He also reminds us in more than one place that we are many members of one gathered body. This is why we have provided options such as the FM transmitter, outdoor services, and Nearpod to allow online interaction during Sunday morning gatherings. We also encouraged outdoor small groups as soon as they were possible so that our children, youth, and adults could connect with others. Regular and personal interaction is how we participate with Jesus in this world (Matthew 18:20). For these reasons, the elders want to continue to allow for as many in our body to gather as we can.

Our **third** desire during this time is to promote unity in our church family. In a time when the world is marked by so much division, Jesus' followers continue to be called to unity and love. John 17:22-23 records Jesus' prayer that we would be united in such a way that it would be clear to the world that he was sent from God. Paul tells us that our unity through the Holy Spirit is what makes us know Jesus and live like him in this world (Ephesians 4:1-6, Colossians 2:2-3). King David tells us in Psalm 133 that God's blessings flow from our unity. When we live and serve through our unity in Christ, the world can't help but notice and see that God is good. That is why we must focus on our unity in Christ and common calling to follow after Jesus. The elders have done this by bathing our

decisions in prayer and not acting until we are in agreement. We have looked at all the information we could find. We set aside our own opinions and sought to do what God is calling our church to do in this time and place. We have also asked our church family to join us in prayer and asked for your input on how to gather and do ministry in the coming months. One blessing I have found in all of this is that regardless of our strong opinions, we have been able to meet in gracious love and truly encourage and bless each other through worship and service together.

This is what led us to gather outside for the summer, while the weather permits. God has been so good! Almost every Sunday has had weather that allowed us to gather. God also provided equipment through two gracious members of our community. Even though they do not attend our church, they have let us borrow their equipment for as long as we need it. We also know that the weather will begin to change with the seasons. So, with patient planning through prayer, the Elders have made a plan for indoor worship beginning October 4. In light of the continuing pandemic, we ask that those who attend use the following precautions.

- Most importantly, monitor your own health. If you have any of the symptoms associated with COVID or have had recent contact with a person positive for COVID, please do not come to church and join us online instead. Even if you feel under the weather and are not sure, join us online. The common symptoms include fever (over 100.4), shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, severe headache, chills, muscle pain, loss of taste or smell.
- Observe social distancing while in the building. Our sanctuary and foyer will have chairs and tables set up to enable this. We ask that you do not rearrange how these are set up.
- Please wear masks or face shields before and after our worship service, and when you use the restroom. This will enable us to fellowship inside our building. We will also be providing a separate seating section in the foyer during worship, where masks will be worn at all times.
- Wash or sanitize your hands often. We will continue to provide hand sanitizer throughout the building.
- The building will be sanitized with disinfectant prior to any gathering that takes place indoors. We are also modifying our heating and cooling system to ensure the building is well-ventilated.
- Volunteers in theHUB will wear masks or face shields at all times. Per the Governor's orders for schools, pre-k and elementary students are not required to wear masks, but are encouraged to do so. Each student will have their own supplies and activities have been modified to limit physical contact. Students will be joining their parents in the Sanctuary for the first 2 songs rather than going to PowerUp. Toys in the nursery will be swapped out each week.

Our Leader Board feels these precautions will allow us to continue to be united in Christ by offering ministries with as many people able to safely attend as possible. We will also continue to offer both livestreaming and Nearpod for those who are not able to join us in person. Please continue to pray for our church family as we seek to take our next steps in maturity in Christ. We are very excited about this next phase and look forward to worshipping with you.

God Bless,

HomeFront Leader Board

Pastor Dave, Dennis Moritz, Michael Brown, Mark Horjus, and Sam Doornbos