



Re-Opening Plan

Hey Church family!

It's been a pretty crazy couple of months hasn't it? It's times like this that remind us that we are living in a broken world. The words of the Lord's prayer are perfect in a time like this:

*Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

We have talked long and hard about how we should come back together as a church family. We've wrestled with the legal components, your feedback, our mission as a church, and the practical logistics of organizing Sunday morning services.

Please read through this plan so you can get a sense not only for what we're going to do, but some of the undergirding reasons for why we are going to proceed accordingly. I've attached an article at the end of our plan that I really appreciated and I'd love for you to read. It's called [*Church, Don't Let Coronavirus Divide You.*](#) This was a very helpful document for me as I considered how to lead us back into worshipping together again.

We love you and are so grateful to serve the Lord with you.



Pastor Marcus

As we plan to come back together as a church family, the following plan is based on the following four questions.

1. **When** can we re-open legally?
2. **How** do we feel about re-opening?
3. **Who** are we re-opening for?
4. **What** should we do as we re-open?

The next several pages will unpack each of these questions in a little more detail.



Alvadore Christian

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What should we do as we re-open?

PLAN

3

Who are we re-opening for?

MISSION

2

How do we feel about re-opening?

CONSIDERATION

1

When can we re-open legally?

SUBMISSION

1. The first step for making our plan for re-opening is to ask a couple of questions:
 - **“What kind of posture** do we want to take with regard to our governing authorities?”
 - **“What can we do legally?”**

1 When can we re-open legally?
SUBMISSION

Guiding Scriptures

Romans 13:1-7

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed"

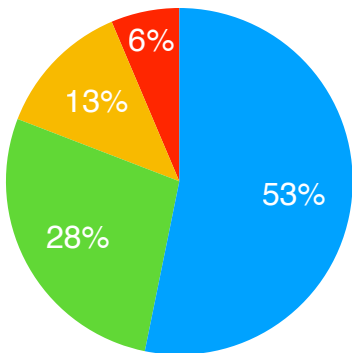
1 Peter 2

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,[b] whether it be to the emperor[c] as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as

Summary

The primary posture we are going to take in our re-opening plan is one of **submission**. Being submissive does not necessarily mean we agree with everything our government says. The primary concern is to not provide an opportunity for those in authority over us, or for our neighbors (particularly our unbelieving neighbors) to have any reason to find fault with how we are coming back together as a church family. As we are able, we will follow all requirements from the State.

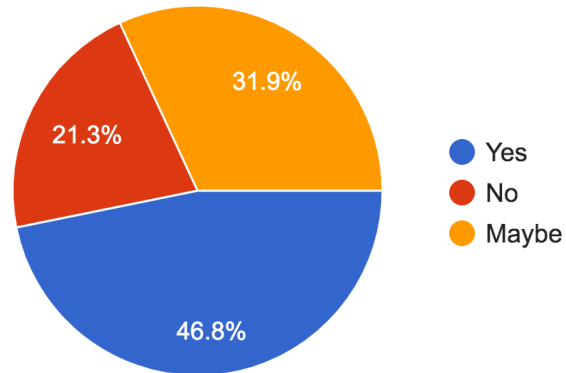
2. The second step for making our plan for re-opening was to ask, **“How do you feel about re-opening?”** We wanted your feedback to have a strong say in how we come back together. Below are the major findings from our survey.



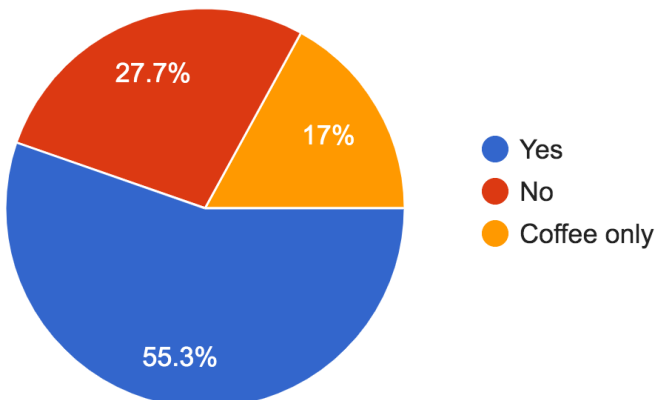
Which of these statements about returning to in-person worship describes you?

- As soon as we can!
- I am hesitant but will be there.
- I am fearful and may not attend.
- I enjoy online and will continue from home

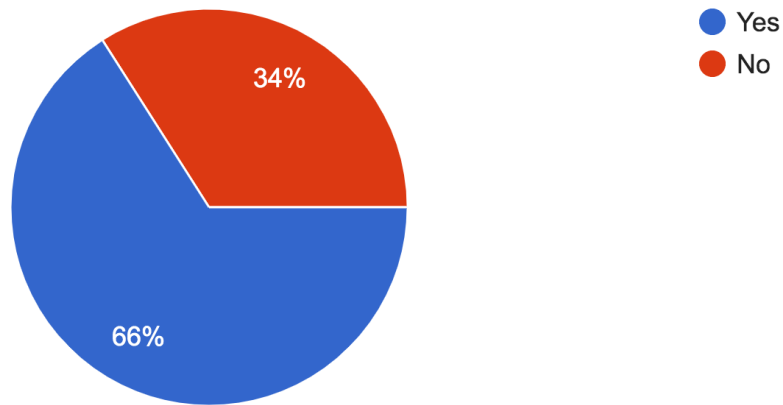
Would you wear a face mask to in-person services?



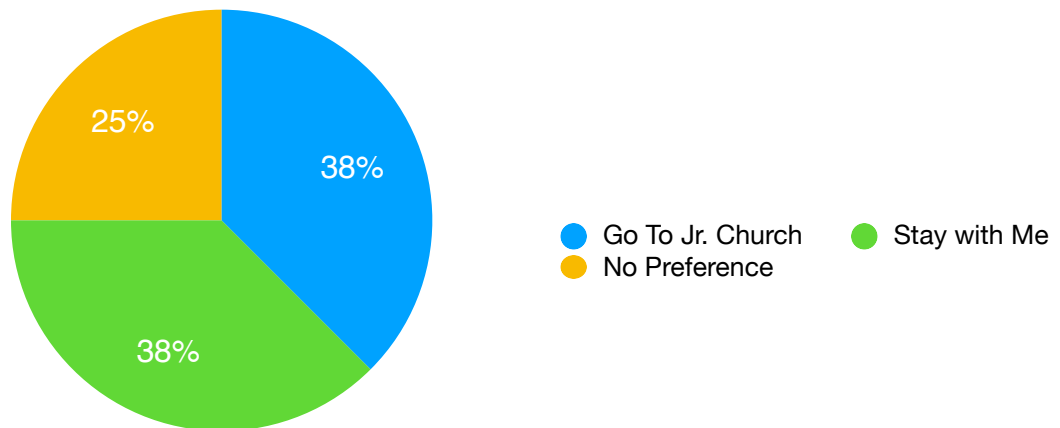
Would you feel comfortable with the church providing coffee and snacks?



Do you feel comfortable with us serving communion in the way we normally do?



If you have kids, would you want your kids to go to Jr. Church/Nursery, or stay with you in service?



Summary

What we found in the survey is that we are ready to be back together as a family! There was however, a pretty **clear note of caution** about how we come back together. Because of this, and in keeping with our commitment to being submissive to the governing authorities, we are going to move forward in re-opening, but we are going to do so with caution, and by making some **strategic changes** to our services for the immediate future.

3. The third step for making our plan for re-opening was to ask, **"Who are we re-opening for?"** We are not simply re-opening for ourselves. We are re-opening for those who are not yet apart of our church family. This is an important time to think about this process in terms of those we are trying to reach.



What is our mission as a church?



but...new life for who?

*Take a moment and read the following passages.
Notice the emphasis on those outside the believing community!*

*"Go and make disciples of **all nations**" Matthew 28:19*

*"The Son of Man came to seek and save what was **lost**" Luke 19:10*

*"I tell you, open your eyes and look at the **fields!** They are ripe for harvest" John 4:35*

*"You are the salt of the **earth**, you are the light of the **world**" Matthew 5:13,14*

*"Love your **neighbor** as yourself" Matthew 22:39*

Summary

We want to re-open with our mission in the front and center! Because of this, we will be taking some precautionary measures to help potential guests feel that we are being responsible and taking good safety measures to make them feel comfortable and safe.

We aren't just re-opening for ourselves.

4	What should we do? PLAN

4. The last step for making our plan for re-opening , based on the way we have answered the previous three questions is to ask, **“What should we do?”** In other words, **“What is our plan?”**

Guiding Scripture

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: *“All things should be done decently and in order.”* 1 Corinthians 14:40 :
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Summary

The following page outlines our plan. It is flexible and subject to change. The goal is to put different phases in place and not fix dates. We need to remain flexible if we have to take a step back or are able to take a step forward. Each of these phases reflects our plan in broad brush strokes. We will do our best to communicate the details of the phase we are in along with any changes we need to make. Updates will be on our website and sent out via email. **See our plan on the next page!**



	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Government Regulations	Gathering Size: 25 or less 6' Physical Distancing	Gathering Size: - Based on square footage, 60 people	Gathering Size - Adjust from Phase 2	Gathering Size - Adjust from Phase 3
Worship Service Format Options	Online Service Drive In Service	Drive In Service Outside or, Park Service Outside or, Sanctuary Service Inside	Sanctuary Services Live Online Drive In Service - Transmitter	Sanctuary Services Live Online Drive In Service - Transmitter
Programs for Adults Busy Bags for Kids	No Kids activities sent in the mail	No Kids activities sent in the mail	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Children's Ministry	No Children's Ministry Activity No Nursery	No Children's Ministry Activity No Nursery Playground Closed	Yes - Children's Messages (kids stay with parent) Nursery Available Playground Open	Yes - Resume having combination of Junior Church Messages and Lessons Nursery Available Playground Open
Food / Snacks	No	No	Coffee Only	Coffee and Snacks
Communion	Bring Your Own Communion	Bring Own Communion (Drive-In) Single Serve (stay in seats)	Single Serve Communion Stay in Seats	Communion at Tables 2 Additional Communion Tables
Offering	Online / Mail In	Online / Mail In / Offering Box	Online / Mail In / Offering Box	Online / Mail In / Offering Box
Events In Building (Memorials / Weddings)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Life Groups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Safety Considerations		Hand Sanitizer in multiple places Physical Spacing of 6' (groups) Provide Face Masks if wanted Sanitize areas after each week Close Drinking Fountain Signage with Safety Precautions Marked seating in pews	Adjust accordingly from Phase 2	Adjust Accordingly from Phase 3

As a church family, we will need to continue to be flexible if certain governmental regulations shift and change.

**The following article was published by the *Gospel Coalition*.
It helped me think through our overall trajectory for coming together as a family.**

Church, Don't Let Coronavirus Divide You

As if the logistical details weren't challenging enough—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, and so on—the whole conversation is fraught with potential for division. If a congregation—and within it, a leadership team—is at all a microcosm of our larger society, it will likely contain a broad assortment of strongly held convictions. Some will be eager to meet in person and impatient to wait much longer to get back to normal. Others will insist it's unwise to meet at all until there's a vaccine. Plenty will fall somewhere in between.

In such a precarious and polarizing environment, how can churches move forward in beautiful unity (Ps. 133) rather than ugly division? It won't be easy. But by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit working to unify us in ways our flesh resists, the opportunity is there for us to be a countercultural model for the rest of the world.

Countercultural Sacrifice

At a time when self-idolatry is being exposed in ugly ways, the church has an opportunity to model love that places the interests of others above the self. For example, someone might find it personally difficult—even maddening—to have to wear a mask during church and stay six feet away from everyone at all times. You might think these precautions are a needless overreaction. But here's the thing: *even if it turns out you're right*, can you not sacrifice your ideal for a season, out of love for others who believe the precautions *are* necessary? Even if you personally think it is silly, or even cowardly, for someone to stay home even after the church is open again on Sundays, can you not heed Paul's wisdom in Romans 14: “Let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother”? Or 1 Corinthians 8:9: “Be careful, however, that your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”

Likewise, those who think the lockdowns should continue should not pass judgment on those who question the wisdom of the government's ongoing restrictions. Churches should strive to honor people on both sides of the spectrum. Yes, it will be costly for churches to keep offering online services for those who don't feel comfortable attending physical gatherings. Yes, it will be a sacrifice for church members who are sick of masks, social distancing, and Zoom to continue to use these for the sake of others. But little is more Christian than a posture of sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). We should embrace it with gladness.

Countercultural Humility

Have you noticed how remarkably *confident* so many of us are in our views right now? Unfounded certainty—on the part of laypeople, leaders, modelers, and “experts” alike—is a contagion at least as viral as COVID-19 itself. We could all use a bit more humility, and the church should lead the way.

As much as ever before, Christians should follow the advice of James to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (1:19). Listening well may slow down the process of deliberation and planning, but it is worth it. Whatever opinions church leaders themselves have on the matter of reopening, they should take time to humbly hear the voices of others—perhaps convening forums of various stakeholders within the church, as well as other church and government leaders in their area. Church members should likewise model Christlike humility (e.g., Phil. 2:3) in how they react to the plans outlined by leaders, even if they don't agree with every aspect of it. No one of us should assume we've arrived at the definitive answer on

how to do this well. Let's model humility by acknowledging that everything is not obvious, and we are all just trying to do the best we can in this "build the plane in midair" moment.

Countercultural Patience

Patience is one of the rarest virtues in today's insta-everything world. And yet patience has rarely been more needed, as many of us are antsy to break free of "stay home" isolation and get back to normalcy as soon as possible. To be sure, it is good and right to be eager to gather again as churches. We should take Hebrews 10:25 seriously when it says we ought not neglect meeting together. We should feel the ache of what is lost when we only meet virtually, and every Christian should long for the day when "church on Zoom" gives way to "church in a room." That day will come. But we should be careful to not rush it. We should be careful to not go faster than governments allow, or faster than those in our community can understand. We should be patient with a timeline that might be slower than we'd prefer; patient with a reopening process that will doubtless be clunky; patient with leaders feeling the pressure of this complex situation; and patient with one another as we figure out the new normal. Those who are not comfortable with physical gatherings should be patient with those who *are*, and vice versa. As hard as it will be to practice patience, remember that in the scheme of eternity this season—whether it's months long or years—will be but a blip.

Countercultural Nuance

We live in an *un*-nuanced age. The economic model of the media (built on clicks and views) works against nuance. Advertisers know nuance doesn't sell. Politicians know it too. We shouldn't be surprised by how rare it is for someone to hold humble, complicated, "both/and" views in today's hyper-partisan, media-catechized world. But if churches are going to emerge from this crisis with unity and fellowship intact, we must embrace the countercultural path of nuance. It's the path that avoids ALL CAPS hysteria of every extreme sort, recognizing that truth is rarely as simple and shrill as Twitter would have us think. It's the path that prizes *both* courage and prudence, and avoids *both* pollyannaish and doomsday responses. It means we can be skeptical of some aspects of the lockdown without resorting to outrageous conspiracy theories, and we can honor governing authorities (Rom. 13) while engaging them in civil pushback when necessary. Countercultural nuance avoids thinking the worst of people and concedes that the other side of a debate is sometimes right, just as we are sometimes wrong. Nuance often results when humility and patience combine.

There are some things Christians should *not* be nuanced about, of course, and one of those is our rugged commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and all that Scripture commands. What Paul urges the Ephesian church, therefore, should be equally urgent for us today: "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1–3).

Brett McCracken is a senior editor at The Gospel Coalition and author of *Uncomfortable: The Awkward and Essential Challenge of Christian Community*, *Gray Matters: Navigating the Space Between Legalism and Liberty*, and *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide*. Brett and his wife, Kira, live in Santa Ana, California, with their son Chet. They belong to Southlands Church, where Brett serves as an elder. You can follow him on Twitter.

