



First Baptist Church
NORTH AUGUSTA
Disciples Making Disciples



May 10, 2020

Church Family,

After our 10th Sunday of having our building closed, let me remind you of an important truth. The church is not closed, the building is. And I can assure you that we will reopen our building at the right time. **Be prepared to see other churches opening before we do.** That is ok. We will move forward as a church with the benefit of observing and learning from their experiences. Each church is different. In talking with other Pastors, I have observed at least three types of approaches to reopening. Some will reopen quickly. Some will open in phases. Some will not reopen anything until they can reopen everything.

In talking with physicians, I have come to understand that this is not a sprint; it is a marathon. We should expect this pandemic to affect our communities for the next 18 to 24 months unless there is a sudden development of an effective antiviral vaccine. We are very early in the epidemic. Our community has not been hit hard, but it will be hit. The epidemic is not expected to stop until approximately 60-80% of the population has immunity, and that is a year to two years away. **Be prepared to see other churches opening before we do.**

Large group meetings in a typical church setting (without proper precautions) are likely to further spread the disease in a congregation and a community. Our decision making will prioritize minimization of harm to our people, and this will cause us to be more cautious than some would like. This approach will tend to push restarting on-campus services later than some would prefer in order to be sure we are ready. Choirs and even congregational singing in a large group setting may also be a potent means of airborne spread of the disease. **Be prepared to see other churches opening before we do.**

As your pastor, I will never ask or expect you to take an unnecessary risk. I will not be rushed, and I will not be hurried. We will not be the first, and we will not be the last. On Mother's Day, I took great joy in knowing my mom was able to connect with her church without any unnecessary risks. We need her around for the long haul! We will continue to find even better ways of keeping our congregation connected. Next week, I will share the steps and phases our church family will use as we move forward with cautious optimism to reopen our campus at the right time.

Your Pastor,

Stephen Cutchins