



May 28, 2020

Dear ENCOUNTER Family,

I've been thinking about you a lot lately. I'm hoping you're holding up well, even with the many challenges COVID-19 has brought about. On behalf of our Elder Board and Staff, we are praying for you, and constantly listening for wisdom from God for every step we take in the days ahead.

We're all anxious to be back in the same space, worshipping together in person. Some churches are opening up their campuses and some are saying, "we're not opening until there's a vaccine in sight." And you have probably heard every imaginable position in between those two extremes.

First off, I want to remind you of something crucial. While we haven't been meeting on campus, our church has never been closed! Hundreds of individuals and families have been gathering together online for weekend services, many small groups are meeting on Zoom, Facebook, and other platforms, plus our kids and teen ministries are providing excellent online options for connection. There are countless ways the people of ENCOUNTER have been caring for each other and serving in our community. We are very much open and operating! Never forget, WE are the church. We take Christ with us everywhere we go!

As far as reopening our campus goes, we are paying attention to every source that is out there as well as expert health care professionals right here in our own community. As we consider timing, I believe we have a couple of primary responsibilities. First, we don't want to do anything to endanger our faith family, especially those who are at a higher risk. Secondly, we have to think about our witness in the community. Both of those factors play a major role in our timing.

There are many considerations involved in re-gathering on campus; social distancing guidelines, the very limited number of people that can gather at one time, kids ministry and childcare limitation, the warning from all sources that singing together presents a unique risk, the amount of disinfecting required after each of our services ... and so forth.

Our Elder Board and leadership team are in agreement that God is not leading us to open our campus just yet. When we do, we plan on using a very simple online tool that will allow you to sign-up in advance for the service you'd like to attend. That will enable us to maximize our facility without turning people away. Also, you can rest assured that when we do re-gather as an option, we'll be following all the recommended protocols.

Even after our campus re-opens, we will make our weekend service available online as well for those who may not be ready to gather in person. We'll keep you right up-to-date with any new developments as we move closer to reopening. We're really excited for our Preschool to be able to hold a summer session beginning June 15! Little steps forward!

Thank you for faithfully giving to ENCOUNTER which has enabled us to weather this challenge! We are continuing to support all our global partners and local care ministries because of your giving. Thank you too for the service and encouragement you pour out for others. *"God ... will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them."* (Hebrews 6:10).

The Lord is our Light, and our Salvation. He is our Shepherd and our Rock. He is with us, and we will not be shaken. He will guide us all the way through this valley.

With Love,

Pastor Daniel