

June 4, 2020

the SPIRE



First Baptist Church
columbia



First Baptist COVID-19 Update

First Baptist Family,

We wanted to give you an update on the Church Council's decisions regarding resuming in-person activities. All of us are longing for the day when we can be together again for worship and fellowship. God created us for community and relationships, yet our circumstances have demanded that we stay apart. We are grateful for the technology that certainly helps ease the distance and maintain connections, but we still miss each other and conversations that happen in person. Despite this, we know that we are still learning about COVID-19, and while Columbia has done well in flattening the curve, the spread of the disease is still a concern. We are actively engaging the guidance of our local government on reopening plans (<https://www.como.gov/coronavirus/latest-updates/>). On Tuesday, May 26, the city enacted Order No. 2020-06, removing the Shelter-in-Place order and allowing all businesses to open provided they follow the order's guidelines.

With this in mind, our church leadership is moving to exercise caution as we explore how to best to adapt these guidelines to the life of our church. It is our deep desire to follow Jesus' call to love our neighbors and to do all that we can to protect our community and one another from the virus. Below are the details of what Phase 2 will look like for First Baptist, as set forth by the Church Council. For the next few weeks, this phase will focus on reopening the church office for staff. Beginning June 2, the church office will remain closed to the public, but our staff will return on a modified schedule to move towards normal operations and prepare for our next steps. If they choose, small groups also have the option of meeting in-person outdoors either at a city park, on the front lawn of the church or in the church parking lot. We will not be meeting for corporate, in-person gatherings yet, but will maintain our virtual worship service each Sunday. This is in accordance with the recommendations set forth in the city's Road to Reopening Plan, page 50.

The Church Council will meet again on June 15 and continue to meet every three weeks to evaluate how our plans are going, review any new recommendations by city officials, and current activity of the Coronavirus to guide us towards resuming in-person worship later this summer. Please continue to pray for our community, our church family, and all of our leaders as we work together to make the best decisions possible during these difficult times.



Phase I

Phase I began in late March as local and state officials enacted Shelter-in-Place orders. The church offices effectively closed and all in person gatherings were suspended and moved online.

Phase II

After listening to the guidance of an epidemiologist, local health experts, our city governance, and our church leadership, we will begin implementation of Phase II on June 2. This phase will focus on reopening the church office for staff to reestablish the support system necessary to operate our facility and allow small groups to gather outdoors, if they choose to do so, in adherence to local health recommendations. The building will remain closed during the week except by appointment.

Phase II / Initial Steps

- Church office reopens for staff. While staff will be in the building during normal hours of operation, the building will remain closed to the public except by appointment (*those coming for appointments need to have masks on while in the building*). Some staff will continue to work from home at times, according to the recommendations set forth in the city's Road to Reopening Plan, to help maintain appropriate social distancing measures.
- Pastor Carol McEntyre is available for in-person pastoral care by appointment. Masks will be required for the meeting and appropriate social distancing will be maintained.
- Part of this phase will be to reengage our volunteer support for worship as possible to assist with the webcast and worship elements. We will need more volunteers to work with our webcast going forward.
- While online gatherings are still recommended for our small groups. We know that connection to others is a fundamental human need. God created us for community; it is crucial for our emotional and spiritual well-being. As such, during this phase small groups have the option to meet in-person outdoors. We are encouraging that this take place either at a city park, on the front lawn of the church, or in the church parking lot. If groups contact the church office, access to the restrooms can be arranged. However, groups will be responsible for wiping down the restroom after each use.
 - When gathering outdoors at the church, masks are required. All greetings should be verbal and NOT physical. Avoid handshakes, elbow bumps, and hugs.
 - Physical distancing of 6 feet will be maintained.
 - We ask that no communal food and drinks be provided. Individuals may bring their own, but we ask you not to share.



- o There is no way to completely mitigate the risk, except to shelter-in-place until a vaccine is available. Therefore, high-risk individuals are encouraged not to attend in person gatherings.
- o Childcare at the church is not possible under Phase II of the reopening plan.

Phase II / Next Steps for Consideration by the Church Council

As we evaluate the initial steps of Phase II, we will continue to further plan and build support that will be needed in order to open the church for small group gatherings and eventually corporate worship. These will include (but not be limited to): purchasing additional equipment and supplies needed, establishing procedures for disinfecting and cleaning areas between use, prepping determined rooms for group gatherings based on social distancing guidelines, determining a maintainable enlarging of our volunteer base to continue webcasting extras for both services, and creating teams of volunteers to coordinate reopening needs such as greeters to open doors and provide direction, ushers to help with seating and orderly dismissal, and sanitation teams to properly service areas while groups are in the building.

As we work towards these goals, if you would like to volunteer to serve in any of these areas (particularly, webcasting, cleaners, greeters, or ushers), please contact Michael McEntyre, mmcentyre@fbc-columbia.org, and let us know. We will need to have both our plan and the needed volunteers in place to proceed forward with reopening, so please help us to be ready.

Some of the possible Phase II Next Steps for discussion:

- Reopening the church building during the week.
- Having adult Sunday morning small groups return to the church (with a virtual option to join and following appropriate social distancing measures).
- Resuming regularly scheduled weekday activities in the building with appropriate social distancing measures.
- The use of our facility by outside groups.



Phase III

Phase 3 of returning to corporate worship will depend on the continued successful work noted above, the guidance of the city leadership, the recommendations of leading epidemiologists monitoring the spread of Covid-19, and a majority decision of the Church Council.

May God bless you and keep you,

First Baptist Church Council & Pastors Carol, Michael, and Brittany

A Letter from the Kieffer's

Dear First Baptist Church Family,

I want to thank you for raising me. You have been there from the very beginning of my life and have stuck with me throughout. Almost all of my life memories involve the church: Fall retreats, church choir and bells, Christmas Eve services, Easter Egg hunts, Sunday school, and youth overnights, just to mention a few.

My church family supported me through my rebellious teenage years, (okay, they may have lasted longer than just my teens). You loved me even in my most awkward of moments, and there were quite a few of those. You were the first people I told when Nick and I got engaged. In fact, Joannie Sorrells told me I was going to marry Nick even before we started dating (Miss you Joannie). I was dedicated, baptized, and married in this church surrounded by your love. You rejoiced with Nick and me when we had our children and you promised to help raise them in the ways of Christ. You have lived up to this promise and I know you will continue to support Lexie as she stays in Columbia. You supported each and every child we brought into our home. They were all able to experience Christ's love through this church.

Nick and I are excited for this next new adventure God has given us. Leaving our church family has been the hardest part of this transition but we know HE has chosen this path and has great things planned for us. Please come visit us in Little Rock. We will miss you more than you will ever know.

In Him,



Janet and Nick, Lexie, Cole & LaTavious Kieffer

8 Portland Rd.

Little Rock, AR 72212

email: jskieffer1969@gmail.com

phone: 573-489-8697





FIRST BAPTIST
 **book club**

The Sacred Enneagram

BY CHRISTOPHER HEUERTZ

7:00 PM
VIA ZOOM

| **JUNE 16**

First Baptist Book Club - June 16

The First Baptist Book Club will have its next meeting on June 16 at 7:00 pm via Zoom to discuss part 2 of *The Sacred Enneagram* by Chris Heuertz. For more information, or to receive the link to the Zoom call, email Brittany, Pastor of Families and Spiritual Formation, or join the book club Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstbaptistbookclub/>



Prayers
& Concerns

- Prayer Requests -

- Mike Brewer, whose mother, Betty Payne, passed away in Bolivar, Missouri.
- Andy Emerson, whose father Raymond Kaufman, passed away.
- The Kausler family as they continue to mourn the loss of Barry.
- Amy Johns' husband, Michael, is undergoing tests for neurological issues.
- Kim Purcell will undergo knee surgery again because of a fall.



Update from Keith & Mary

For the last couple of weeks I've been busy sewing face masks. Beginning on the first of June, the Dutch public transit system will be more open, but all passengers over 13 will be required to wear a face mask. Olesea Ciochina, our partner in Moldova, has also sewn a stack of face masks. She observed, "We need to do our part. God protects us, but we need to be wise also."



She shared another example of God at work through people doing their part. During this time, she said, people are looking for a new relation with God. Those from the village of Vulcanesti who went abroad to work—in France, Russia, Germany, the Netherlands—have many questions. Now Olesea and her husband Petru have the opportunity to pray with them and answer questions. Sometimes they even invite theology professors from the seminary in Chisinau to have a word for them and answer their questions.

For years we have talked and prayed about starting some sort of satellite Gypsy Smith School* to train Romany Christian leaders in Moldova. Now, without any elaborate extra planning on our part, God has achieved the same result!

Here's another example. For years, I have been plugging away on the Davar: Bridging to Literacy website. All of the games for teaching preschool skills have been uploaded in English and in Romanian. Ideally, there would also be PDFs of all the games which could easily be download and printed. Since the start of the lockdown here in Europe, I've been meeting weekly with three other members of the Davar team. One of them, an independent missionary in Romania, usually organizes camps and VBS programs throughout the summer. What will she do this year? She spontaneously volunteered to make all these PDFs. And she volunteered to lay out and print up a booklet in Romanian of all the Davar games (Start Games, Math Games, Parent-Child Club). It should be available for the Roma Workers Network conference tentatively scheduled for September. This, for me personally, is a gift from God.

This week only one member of the Davar team could join me for that weekly meeting: Alina, another Romanian friend. During our conversation, I remembered something else Olesea had said. Many Moldovans hoped to plant big vegetable gardens this year, but the whole country is experiencing a drought. Alina's husband is originally from Ethiopia. Members of his family plant big gardens there. Would Alina ask them for information on gardening in a dry climate and send that advice, in Romanian, to Petru & Olesea? Alina is also an experienced gardener. She knows Petru & Olesea, and they know that anything she recommends will come from practical experience.

The unpremeditated inspiration to ask Alina came from God. We do our part. And if more people have something to eat during this difficult time, we will praise the original Gardener.

Still praying (doing our part),
Mary VanRheenen & Keith Holmes



Thankful for:

- +Health. Our daughters here in the Netherlands and our extended family in the States are all still healthy.
- +Pentecost; the Holy Spirit who inspires us, teaches us, helps us do our part.
- +two Student.Go (Student.Stay) summer interns who will help make videos, including for Davar;
- +Petru & Olesea and the church in Vulcanesti; a group from the village working in France who want to be baptized there at Pentecost;
- +people like yourselves who continue to do their part by praying and giving.

Request Prayer for:

- +these two summer interns, Marshall Ellis & Isaac Pittman and that we will all be able to work well together via the Internet;
- +creation and use of Davar instructional videos;
- +rain in Moldova + new ways of gardening in these dry years;
- +Romany and others who depend on seasonal or day labor and are currently unable to work.

Photos and additional stories at:
CBF Romany Ministries Blogspot or
Facebook page.

Contributions to the Offering for
Global Missions (OGM) provide for
the presence of all field personnel,
including Keith and Mary (online
giving: www.cbf.net/offering-for-global-missions).

Contributions to Keith and Mary's programming fund their specific ministry (online: Keith Holmes and Mary VanRheenen programming).

Or mail to: Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, P.O. Box 102972, Atlanta, GA 30368-2972, checks clearly marked for either OGM or Holmes/VanRheenen Programming.

*The Gypsy Smith School meets three or four times a year in Bucharest, Romania. Romany Christian leaders come for a short, intensive training session. Petru has gone several times and taken Romany from Chisinau as well as Vulcanesti with him. The school is named after Rodney Smith, a Romany evangelist who called himself Gypsy Smith.



OFFERING FOR
GLOBAL MISSIONS

Keith Holmes and Mary VanRheenen are Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel, from First Baptist, serving as resource coordinators for Romany and those working with Romany throughout Europe. This husband-wife team focuses on Christian media resources in major Romany languages and educational resources.