

April 30, 2020

Dear Pastors of the Kansas City District:

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. In the words of the apostle Paul, “(We) thank (our) God every time (we) remember you. In all (our) prayers for all of you, (we) always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:3-5).

We give gratitude to God for you. You have been in our prayers as we all go through these unprecedented times. In our last letter to you, dated March 30, 2020, we thanked you for “suspending all gatherings including worship services, midweek programs, and small groups until further notice.” We know things have not been easy as on-site gatherings have been put on hold. At the same time, we rejoice that the work of God is being accomplished in creative ways.

Thank you for pastoring well during this season. Thank you for the ways you are both protecting and serving your communities. The people of God have always been asked to reflect God’s heart for the vulnerable and the marginalized. Our history as Nazarenes has exemplified this – from our view on alcohol consumption to our support for unwed mothers to our compassion for the homeless and the hungry. This crisis has given us opportunity to put the needs of others ahead of our own desires by denying ourselves and continuing to faithfully take up our cross and follow the Lord in protecting the most vulnerable.

Undoubtedly you are looking forward to the day we can reopen our church buildings for ministry. The Board of General Superintendents has empowered District Advisory Boards to give directives and provide guidelines to local churches in the matter of congregational gatherings, based on any specific instructions from the Health Department and/or other public officials. We are encouraging our churches to think in terms of a gradual, phased return to a new normal, marked by strict protocols that allow our churches to continue to be a blessing and not a burden. We want to be good neighbors, contributing to the well-being of our communities.

Because the district spans two states with diverse county and local municipalities and a metro area and has churches located in urban, suburban, and rural settings, it is difficult to identify a specific date on which all of our churches can begin to open their doors. Every church is uniquely different, and pastors and local church boards are asked to follow federal, state, county, and local guidelines. Be mindful of the vulnerable among us – both the elderly and those with underlying medical issues that might make them susceptible. Since we love God and love neighbor, we will be careful not to facilitate the spread of the virus.

It is time to begin preparing for resumption of gatherings in a phased, limited approach. Each lead pastor and local church board should work with local officials in determining what is good and wise in reopening. The federal government has issued a plan for phased-in reopening. In Phase 1, churches “can operate under strict physical distancing protocols.” In Phase 2, churches “can operate under moderate physical distancing protocols.” In Phase 3, churches “can operate under limited physical distancing protocols.” A link detailing the three Phases can be accessed [here](#).

State and local officials will determine when a community has qualified for Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 protocols. This means some churches in the district may open sooner than others. As of today (April 30, 2020), none of the district has yet entered into Phase 1.

As our churches anticipate and look forward to returning to on-site services, we want to recommend the implementation of social distancing protocols. Each church should develop or adopt protocols for in-person gatherings now, so that you will be ready to begin the process of reopening when the time is right. Sanitation precautions, safety precautions, and size of gathering precautions will need to be considered. Wayne Nelson has compiled a list of helpful suggestions that can be accessed [here](#). The district website also contains several COVID-19 resources and is updated weekly. When we do begin to gather, please give special consideration to those who are more vulnerable.

Thank you again for being such good shepherds to the flocks you serve. We are filled with hope and feel privileged to partner with you in this ministry of reconciliation.

On behalf of the Kansas City District Advisory Board,



Eddie Estep
District Superintendent



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