A Plan to Reopen Goshen Baptist Church in Phases

Introduction: The last time that Goshen Baptist Church had an on-campus service was Sunday, March 15. Due to the spread of COVID-19 and the government social distancing restrictions that accompanied, GBC voluntarily suspended all on-campus services and activities beginning the week of March 16. As we look to the possibility of social distancing restrictions being lifted in a phased approach in the weeks and months ahead, this is a plan to consider how GBC may safely begin meeting together again in accordance with remaining social distancing restrictions. This plan was developed by consulting the White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again.

Phase 0: Extreme Physical Distancing/Stay At Home Order
- All on-campus services and activities remain suspended until Stay at Home Order is lifted and we enter Phase 1 of reopening.
- Continue to produce video sermons to be viewed via YouTube, Facebook, and DVD.
- Continue to host weekly congregational ZOOM meeting for singing, prayer, and fellowship.
- A weekly Bible study will be held via ZOOM.
- Send communication via email and letter.
- Utilize online giving and mailed checks for tithes and offerings.

Phase 1: Strict Physical Distancing
- All inside services and activities remain suspended for the length of Phase 1.
- When Phase 1 begins, we will begin holding an outdoor Sunday morning service at 9am. This service will continue for the duration of Phase 1.
  • Service will be on the back field behind the church building.
  • The service will be limited to 1 hour to minimize need for bathroom facilities.
  • Those identified as especially vulnerable to COVID-19 should consider remaining in their vehicles. They will be able to hear the service through their FM radio or by rolling down their windows.
  • Those choosing to participate in the service outside their cars should bring their own chair. A limited number of chairs will be available under the pavilion for those who may need them. Participants are also encouraged to use outdoor canopies to provide protection from the elements.
  • Anyone outside their vehicle will be required to wear a face mask. Those leading the service will wear a face mask when they are not speaking or singing. Participants should bring their own face mask. A limited number of masks will be available for those who may not have one.
  • All participants must maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet apart. This requirement does not apply to family members of the same household.
  • Hand sanitizer stations will be available.
  • Restrooms will be available in case of emergency.
  • In the event of light rain, the service will go on. In the case of forecasted heavy rain, the service for that week will be canceled and a video message will be available via YouTube, Facebook, and DVD.
- The Sunday morning sermon will be available on YouTube, Facebook, and DVD.
- No in-person small groups will meet during Phase 1.
- A weekly Bible study will be held via ZOOM.
- Continue to use online and mail in giving. Also provide opportunity for folks to drop offering in a bucket as they arrive. No passing of a plate.

Phase 2: Moderate Physical Distancing
- We will ease back into gathering inside for worship during Phase 2.
- We will use 2-3 Sunday services to allow for appropriate social distancing.
- Services will be spaced out enough to allow for one group to leave and the next group to arrive without intermingling.
- The facility will be disinfected between services. The fellowship hall may be used for a service to make this possible.
- Anyone inside the building will be required to wear a face mask. Those leading the service will wear a face mask when they are not speaking or singing. Participants should bring their own face mask. A limited number of masks will be available for those who may not have one.
- Participants will be encouraged to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet apart. This guidance does not apply to family members of the same household.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be available.
- Adults may meet for in-person small groups either in homes or in the church building at a time when the building is not being occupied for worship services.
- Continue to use online and mail in giving. Also provide opportunity for folks to drop offering in bucket as they arrive for service. No passing of the plate.
- Doors will be opened by greeters.
- There will be no children’s activities through the end of Phase 2.

Phase 3: Limited Physical Distancing
- We will ease back into a more normal routine for gathering during Phase 3.
- This could still include multiple services to allow for social distancing.
- This may include resuming Sunday School and some limited children’s activities (i.e. nursery, children’s church).
- Hand sanitizer stations will still be available.
- Face masks may be required.
- Giving may still need to follow the plan for Phase 2.
- Special precautions will be taken for observing the Lord’s Supper.
- Specifics will be worked out as we move through the phases and get closer to this point.

Additional Considerations:
- There remains uncertainty regarding specific restrictions that will be in place from state and local government at each phase.
- This plan is to get us thinking and planning. The plan will undoubtedly require adjustments. There may be setbacks. Patience will be a necessity.
- If we are still in Phase 1 when Fall arrives, we may have to move our outdoor service to the afternoon.
- If we are still in Phase 1 as Fall turns to Winter, we may need to explore our options for utilizing the church building to meet in smaller groups.

- In each phase, we will seek to balance our Biblical mandate to gather, submission to government authorities, and the safety of everyone as we resume gathering.

- While those most vulnerable to the virus may need to limit their interaction more than others, we will not forget them as we move through these phases.