

5/1/20

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many states have begun measuredly reopening their societies while the COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague the world. Governor Beshear just announced that churches will be allowed to reassemble in some form beginning May 20.

At the same time, according to a report in the New York Times, Bowling Green, Kentucky currently ranks (remarkably) in the top 10 cities in the entire country in terms of its case doubling rate. That means that this is still among the most dangerous times for us to assemble in terms of infection risk. Dr. Fauci of the NIAID recently cautioned states against reopening too quickly.

We expect that many of you wonder about our intentions with regard to resuming services at Lost River. The purpose of this letter is to let you know that the elders are continually pondering this and we want to communicate with you about our intentions as the situation develops.

Future planning has to be founded on certain assumptions. These are ours:

- That the governor will continue his reopening of the state in the phases he has suggested.
- That large assemblies, like those of churches, are likely to reopen under social distancing guidelines.
- That the brethren do not want to see others' lives endangered by the elders acting precipitously.
- That the virus will not just "end." Infections (at some level) will likely continue throughout the summer and fall.

If any of these assumptions proves false, then the elders will have to re-evaluate their strategy.

As it stands, and based on the stated assumptions, here are likely triggering events and responses of the elders as the situation develops:

1. The Governor will allow churches to resume limited activities under social distancing guidelines. (His stated target date for this is May 20.)
2. The elders will announce the first in-person assemblies. It will be decided at that time what form those services will take (possibly two or three services on Sunday with physical distancing between members). The elders will likely remind everyone to decide for themselves whether their personal health condition, and those of the people with whom they have contact, would make assembling an unacceptable risk for them. Live streaming will be continued for all members who deem the risk of assembly unacceptable.
3. When deemed safe, assemblies will consolidate to return to normal.
4. When we are assured that classes in confined spaces are safe, they will resume. (Adult classes cannot reasonably resume until children's classes have done so.) This will also depend on the sense of safety that parents have regarding their own children, especially those with problematic health conditions.

As you can see, this course of events is likely to take place over a period of months. We ask for your patience as we try to make decisions that do not compromise the lives of our beloved members while also taking the spiritual strength of individuals and of the body as a whole into utmost consideration.

Thank you all for your supportive and encouraging cards, phone calls and text messages. It means a lot to us.

Sincerely,

The elders