

**MERCY HILL'S**

**REOPENING  
PLAN &  
GUIDELINES**

**LAST UPDATED: AUGUST 6, 2020**

# PROLOGUE

Surely many of you are keeping up with recent updates from the county. The latest order was issued on July 2, 2020. Pertinent to us in particular is the following:

The Order strongly discourages gatherings, but it allows outdoor gatherings (up to 60 people). As explained in the Health Officer's Mandatory Directive on Gatherings, indoor gatherings are not allowed at this time. Gatherings have special rules and must comply with the Directive.

In view of this, we have begun formulating our own plan for slowly reopening as a church. That is what this document is all about. From this point forward we will be housing it on our website and updating it as things develop.

You should know that, whatever our plan for reopening may entail, our hope is to, wherever possible, include options for virtual involvement. We are certainly aware that some are more at risk than others. And we also understand that some may be more cautious and reluctant to gather again in person. Our aim, therefore, is to provide a way of engaging in our groups and services that can accommodate everyone in our congregation, whatever their conviction or comfort level with these things may be.

Along with this, we are committed to cultivating and maintaining a culture of grace at Mercy Hill, especially with regard to this issue. Some congregants are going to be ready and excited to gather in person. Awesome! Others will still want to worship from home. That's great too! Let's refrain from judgment on either side and, instead, allow each individual and family the space to make decisions as they feel God leading them.



# 1. SMALL GROUPS & EVENTS

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## OUR PLAN

We have many small groups and events at Mercy Hill. These include things such as Home Groups, DNA Groups, youth gatherings, prayer meetings, etc. All of these groups are now permitted to begin meeting in person so long as they do so in accordance with county and state guidelines. The leaders of these various groups and events are free to decide if and how they will go about this. If you personally desire to start another group or meeting, feel free to reach out to us at [info@mercyhillchurch.org](mailto:info@mercyhillchurch.org). We'd love to help!

## OUR COMMITMENT

If it is decided that a group or event will meet in person, here is our commitment (as leaders) to you:

1

**Attendance Tracking:** We will keep a list of all people in attendance as part of the county's requirement for the purpose of contact tracing should it become necessary. We will also cap the attendance at or below the number advised by local officials. This may mean that for certain events we will need to have people register in advance and, sadly, will only be able to admit individuals on a first-come-first serve basis.

2

**Sanitation Protocol:** We will do our best to sanitize all that people will utilize when gathering (e.g. seats, surfaces, bathrooms, etc.) using the [guidelines provided by the CDC](#) both before and after the event.

3

**Safety Measures:** We will take all safety measures recommended by government officials. This includes (but is not limited to): (a) maintaining and encouraging social distancing; (b) using and requiring face coverings; (c) washing hands frequently; (d) providing hand sanitizer; (e) refraining from eating and drinking communally; (f) meeting only outside.

4

**Virtual Options:** Wherever possible, we are committed to offering a virtual option for people to join in from home if they feel it is unwise or unsafe for them to gather in person.

# OUR REQUEST

Now, in an effort to keep everyone safe and with a special concern to protect the vulnerable among us, here are some things we would ask from you:

1

**At-Risk Groups:** Please be especially careful if you are among those high at risk (e.g. over the age of 65, with underlying medical conditions such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, etc.). You are encouraged to participate from home though you are free to gather in person if you so desire.

2

**Self-Screening:** Before coming to participate in person, please self-screen at home, including temperature and/or symptom checks using [CDC Guidelines](#).

3

**Safety Measures:** Please commit to following the same sorts of safety measures listed previously (e.g. maintaining social distancing [obviously, families are allowed to sit with each other]; wearing a face mask; washing hands frequently; etc.).

# 4

**Children:** As hard as this is, here is the guidance from the state: “Children should remain in the care of those in their household unit and not interact with children of other parties at any time while visiting facilities. Close play areas and discontinue activities and services for children where physical distancing of at least six feet cannot be maintained.”

# 2. SUNDAY SERVICES

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## THE LATEST

We are focussing our attention first on reopening small groups and events as this seems the most reasonable strategy given the current guidelines and limitations. If you're not already, we strongly encourage you to get plugged into a group! Now is the time!

For at least the near future, then, it is likely, that our Sunday Services will continue in the "Watch Party" format as they have been for the past months. If desired, feel free to host a Sunday Service Watch Party in your backyard with other church members, neighbors, etc. We only ask that you please remain committed to the items outlined in the previous section.

We so appreciate your prayers and support in these difficult days. Christ will lead us forward!

# 3. OUR SOURCES

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COVID-19 Industry Guidance

Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Documents/Mandatory-Directives-Gatherings.pdf>

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/public-health-orders.aspx#executive-summary>

The Gospel Coalition Coronavirus Coverage

COVID-19 & The Church (9Marks)