



HARVEST CHURCH

ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN

April 30, 2020

Dear Harvest and Grace Fellowship Saints,

Your elders and pastors gathered by Zoom on Tuesday evening to talk about something we know you're thinking about. *When will we ever be able to worship together again?* If you're like most Harvest and Grace Fellowship folks, you really miss the rhythm of regular Sunday gatherings, the noisy fellowship, the sermons and singing, the baptisms and Lord's Suppers, each other's voices and faces, the hugs and handshakes. It was such a part of who we are as the family of God. And when it abruptly stopped seven weeks ago, we didn't have a chance to say goodbye to those comforting rhythms of life.

And so now – seven weeks later – we ask, when will we “open up” for public worship and what will it look like when we do? These are the questions your Session is wrestling with right now.

We're very thankful for a group of Harvest members who are helping the Session make the right decisions as we consider next steps. The COVID-19 Task Force members are Adam Post, Becky Stark, Pastor Wayne, Rob VerHeulen, and Nikki Veurink. At their meeting on Tuesday, the Task Force reaffirmed the priority “to worship together in person again as soon as we are able.” This is Session's priority as well. We want to return to face-to-face worship as soon as possible.

But the question is – when and under what circumstances? As we navigate the contours of those questions, your elders are committed to lead by principle, not by personal preferences or popular opinion. Principles such as love for God and neighbor, civil considerations, and health and safety concerns rise to the surface. In each decision, we will be guided by biblical mandates coupled with the best information available.

At the same time, your elders are hearing from you. Thank you for reaching out to express your thoughts or concerns. Some folks would like to meet publicly very soon. They are tired of the stay-at-home restrictions and believe that, with social distancing, we should be able to safely gather in person. Others are worried about opening too soon. There are many unknowns about the virus, and these unknowns create legitimate worry and concern. And there are biblical considerations about civil disobedience that play into the timing of re-opening.

On Tuesday evening, Session considered a range of inputs as we discussed the way forward, finally adopting the following recommendation from the COVID-19 Task Force:

Harvest should not start services in such a way that would violate orders that prohibit public gatherings. The COVID-19 Task Force will make recommendations to Session for the scope of Sunday gatherings that will be based on input from healthcare professionals and current CDC recommendations.

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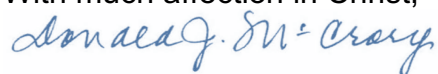
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While adopting this motion, the Session is prepared to think creatively about ways that we can resume in-person worship gatherings in a timely manner that would still allow us to be consistent with our guiding principles, including the call to be subject to civil authorities (Romans 13:1–7).

The Task Force will meet weekly to keep the Session apprised of new developments as they apply to Harvest and Grace Fellowship. On Tuesday, the Session will take up a series of recommendations from the task force on measures to take as we resume in-person gatherings. The Session will provide regular updates to the congregation as we move forward.

So, for now, while we are not able to meet publicly as we all would wish, be reminded that the current circumstances do not hinder the work that God is doing among us and through us for His glory and the extension of His kingdom. And finally, please be in prayer for your elders and deacons as they serve the body, and for the members of the COVID-19 Task Force in their labors on our behalf.

With much affection in Christ,



Donald J. McCrory
for the Harvest Session