

A COVENANT AND PLAN FOR REGATHERING

Drafted and approved by staff 8/18/20; by Medical Ministry Team 8/20/20; and by Deacons 8/27/20

Regathering Covenant

As the Earle Street Baptist Church family begins to regather in our facilities, we are excited about being together again in our spiritual home. As we gather again, we recognize our need to be mutually respectful and considerate, to care for one another appropriately, and to provide a witness/model to the larger community. In keeping with “Our Greater Way Covenant” to love God, love neighbors, and make disciples, the Ministerial Staff, Deacons, and Medical Ministry Team are asking all people who enter our facilities to commit themselves to, and adhere to, the terms of this covenant, as outlined below.

1. In loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we will make decisions and participate in church life with the primary goal of honoring and pleasing God in all we do and say (1 Corinthians 10:31).
2. In loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, we will look out not only for our own self-interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4).
3. In making disciples, we will be a loving witness by creating a safe and welcoming place for people to gather and learn more about Jesus (Romans 15:7).
4. We will not enter the church facilities if we are exhibiting any signs of illness— particularly symptoms of COVID-19.
5. Everyone second grade and up will wear masks at all times and stay appropriately distanced whenever we are in the church buildings.
6. We will follow all instructions with regard to where we enter and exit buildings, and we will use the provided sanitizing stations to clean our hands upon entering and exiting the buildings.
7. We will only use designated restroom facilities when in the building.
8. We will remain positive in our conversations regarding all covenant measures even when they pose an inconvenience to us, or require that we give up certain personal freedoms for the good of the body.
9. We will expect and trust that our church leadership will prioritize health and safety when approving gatherings and activities in the church buildings.
10. We will expect and trust our church leadership to ensure areas are sanitized after use.
11. We will expect a church staff person or volunteer to greet any group gathering in the building and remind them of our covenant commitments.
12. Knowing that there is an inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 wherever people gather, we will voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19 and not hold the church responsible. We are encouraged to notify a church staff person if we test positive for COVID-19 and have been in direct contact with church members and/or staff within the last two weeks.
13. We will embrace this covenant in a spirit of love (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Regathering Plan

As we have seen over the last several months, public health conditions may change and cause us to reconsider and/or revise our plans to regather. But, as of now, this is the tentative regathering plan that has been approved by the Ministerial Staff, Deacons, and Medical Ministry Team.

1. **Through September 27**, our church will continue to **worship** each week **on-line** through pre-recorded worship videos, and **in person** each Sunday evening at 6:30 pm on the grounds of Parisview Baptist Church, 100 Bud Street, at the corner of Old Buncombe Road, next to Lakeview Middle School.

2. **Beginning September 1**, our buildings and grounds will be available for **smaller group gatherings** (classes, committees, etc.), but must be scheduled in advance. These meetings will be limited to the largest rooms in our facilities (to ensure social distancing) and all groups will be required to abide by the terms of our Regathering Covenant. To request approval for your meeting and receive the specifics of our protocol, please contact Denise Plumblee or Ellen Heyward. The church office will be re-open during regular office hours (Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm).

3. **Beginning October 4**, we will be gathering for worship in our Sanctuary at 9 and 11 am, abiding by the terms of our Regathering Covenant, and observing the Sunday morning protocol below. **Initially, there will be no nursery, child care, or children's programs**, but the services will be approximately forty-five minutes in length, and activity bags have been provided for preschoolers and children. **Beginning October 4, we will also be live-streaming our services** so that, if you are unable to attend in person, you may watch the service in real time, or you may access the worship video at some other time at your convenience.

Volunteers – Without an adequate number of volunteers in place each Sunday morning, our regathering will not be possible. In order to be able to begin regathering on October 4, and continue gathering for worship each Sunday, we will have to have teams of volunteers in place each Sunday morning. We are now in the process of enlisting five new teams of volunteers to assist in our worship services for the time being.

- Outside Hosts – These volunteers will be responsible for interacting with guests as they arrive and enter the building.
- Inside Hosts – These volunteers will be responsible for interacting with guests as they make their way through the building to the Sanctuary.
- Sanctuary Hosts – These volunteers will be responsible for interacting with guests while they are in the Sanctuary.
- Overflow Hosts (if needed) – These volunteers will be responsible for interacting with guests that are directed into the overflow rooms when/if the Sanctuary has met capacity limits.
- Cleaning Crew – These volunteers will be responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the various areas throughout the building including the entrance areas, exit areas, bathrooms, and Sanctuary.

Filling these teams is vital to our regathering plan. If you are willing and able to serve on any of these teams, or have questions about the various volunteer opportunities, please contact Chuck Emory, Janice Hinnant or Denise Plumblee as soon as possible.

Seating Capacity – To allow for proper social distancing, we will only be able to utilize approximately thirty percent of our Sanctuary. The balcony will be reserved for volunteers and their families. Once the Sanctuary reaches its capacity, the Fellowship Hall will be available for

overflow seating. Since seating is limited to certain pews, Sanctuary Hosts will be assisting people with finding seats.

Reservations – Because our seating capacity will be limited, and based on our previous survey results, Sanctuary seating will be prioritized based on a reservation system. Reservations to attend the service of your choice (9 am or 11 am) may be made each week online or by contacting Ellen Heyward. Reservations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis as space allows, with an overflow area available. We want to do everything we can to minimize your frustration once you arrive, and maximize your joy.

Entry and Exit – There will be a one-way flow of traffic through the building. Everyone will enter the main building at the Welcome Center and go directly to the third floor via the front stairwell or the new elevator. At the conclusion of the worship service, everyone who is able will exit the Sanctuary through the vestibule, using the steps down to Earle Street. Those with mobility issues may remain seated and be escorted out by a Sanctuary Host via the elevator.

Worship Service – Once you are seated, please remain in your seats until the service has concluded. We will dismiss each service by row to allow for proper social distancing.

Safety Precautions – In order to maintain the safest possible environment for an inside gathering, everyone will be required to **wear a mask** and use **hand sanitizer**. Only one family may ride the elevator at a time. All doors leading to the Sanctuary will be propped open for touchless entry and exit. We hope these safety precautions will allow the greatest number of people to feel comfortable and safe in attending.

Sanitation – We will be cleaning and sanitizing before, between, and after the worship services.

Limited Access/Restrooms - Access within the main building on Sunday mornings will be limited to the traffic flow to the Sanctuary. The entire first floor and the majority of the second and third floors will not be accessible. The restrooms on the third floor near the History Wall will be available with a limit of two individuals inside at one time. Additionally, the doors to these restrooms will be propped open to provide a touchless entry, with appropriate screening for privacy.

Dress – Please feel free to dress casually for worship.

Social Distancing – While we are very excited to see each other in person, remember to maintain the appropriate social distance between you and others not in your family. While we should not hug others or shake hands, we can certainly greet each other warmly and joyfully in a variety of new ways. Be creative, but just be distant!

Be Thankful! - Remember to give thanks to God for the opportunity to be back together in our Sanctuary for in-person worship. And please express your thanks to our volunteers who help to make our regathering possible. “I was glad when they said unto me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’” (Psalm 122:1).

4. **During the month of October**, our Ministerial Staff, Deacons, and Medical Ministry Team will be evaluating public health conditions and the effectiveness of our regathering covenant and plan, and will update our plan to include more regularly scheduled programs and activities (e.g., children’s programs, Sunday School, Wednesday evening gatherings, discipleship groups, etc.).