



May 27, 2020

Dear PCOM Family,

There is an old English expression that states, “May you live in interesting times.” We are certainly in the midst of one of those times. Since March 12 PCOM campus has been closed due to a state ordinance, but moreover due to a desire to keep people safe from Covid-19. Even though the campus has been closed, the church itself has and will remain open. This is because we are the body of Christ and we have continued to worship, to be in mission, and to fellowship with one another in countless ways, especially through the creative means of technology.

Despite our digital gatherings, we all together long for a safe return to normal face to face gatherings for worship, small groups, youth and children. As we’ve all likely discovered anew in this season, there is nothing quite like the beauty of in-person fellowship, complete with its fullest expressions such as hugs, singing, and practices like the Lord’s Supper. We all long to return to this fullness and thus I wanted to write to update you on PCOM’s discernment in this regard.

Here’s where we’re at. Over the last few days, the state of California has modified the stay at home orders to allow for churches to open, albeit with many suggested restrictions. Despite the initial burst of hope that this headline created in many of us, the details of this guidance calls for ongoing Christian discernment and wisdom. If you haven’t seen the details of this guidance, I’d encourage you to give it a read. It is available if you click [here](#).

For instance, the state’s guidance includes a reiteration that people aged 65 or older and those with serious underlying medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, are at higher risk of hospitalization and serious complications. 58% of PCOM membership falls into this category, so while we move forward it will be with greater care and creativity than speed. The guidance also recommends 100 maximum attendance, mandatory use of masks, social distancing of at least 6 feet, disinfecting each room after use, and discontinuing singing due to the increased vapor released and thus increased possibility of spreading the virus. All of this means that we cannot simply return to the way things were before this outbreak.

Nearly a month ago, PCOM formed a task force who have been studying the public health materials and government guidance and have been planning for our campus reopening. Their recommendations are thorough and thoughtful. They recommend a phased approach to how we will reopen gatherings and the campus. We expect to be able share the details of that phased approach within the next week or so after the elders weigh in on the task force’s recommendations and determine the next steps and the pace at which we take them. It is very likely that they will recommend smaller gatherings away from the PCOM campus (perhaps groups to watch the online service, small groups, or small youth gatherings) before moving to larger on-site gatherings.



What I would like to ask you all for at this point are two things that are the marks of those who are led by the Holy Spirit: **patience** and **unity**. In particular, I'd ask for your patience with your staff. The transition to online ministry has been fruitful, but also full of unexpected efforts from our ministry staff that may not be apparent on the surface when viewing our services. Each week your staff has had to learn new things in order to do everything we usually do online. Whatever the immediate next steps end up being, they will inevitably involve yet another transition to a hybrid of smaller in-person gatherings and continued online ministry so that we make sure to include in our worship and fellowship those who are most vulnerable and at risk. This will again require new learning, new training, and new fronts of staff activity.

Please give us time to attempt to do it well. In addition, when you interact with our staff members, I'd ask that we work together to err on the side of gentleness and compassion as we continue to adapt to new forms of ministry. In our nation today everything from wearing a mask to opening the church has become a political football. It is very likely that some will be unhappy with the pace at which we are moving, as other churches around us move more quickly or slowly to reopen. As many of you know, PCOM is a unique church with unique demographics and ministry needs that will mean that we will need to move simultaneously on several fronts with creativity, wisdom, and intentionality. Please work with us to do this together in the spirit of unity.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I would ask that as a congregation we commit ourselves to **pray**. It is only as we seek God's face and hear his voice that we will be given the peace that we need to move through this difficult stage with grace and without fear.

The peace of our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pastor Jackson', written in a cursive style.

Pastor Jackson