

NEW LIFE REOPENING PLAN



NEW LIFE DRESHER CHURCH



02

DEAR NEW LIFE,

Three months ago we were looking ahead to times like Women's Retreat, summer missions trips, membership receptions and baptisms...even communion! But in about a week all of that changed. We would become a virtual church overnight and many things we often assume about church changed.

In the midst of this it has been a joy to see how you have rallied to support one another, grieve together amidst losses, give generously, sit under the ministry of the Word, and serve our area through our food pantry and other forms of service. You have also personally prayed for and encouraged us in these weeks. It has meant a lot to us. Ultimately we're confident that even now Christ is building His Church and nothing can stop it.

Gov. Wolf has now shifted Philadelphia and its neighboring counties from 'red' to 'yellow' phase. As certain restrictions are being lifted, we want to communicate our tentative plan for moving through the next phases.

As we do, we remember two truths: First, we submit to God's sovereignty. This season has taught us that we are not in control. We hold these plans with open hands and realize that they may need to change. Secondly, our decisions are to be rooted in love for God, one another, and our neighbors. What we decide will have a bearing on many lives, so we want to make them wisely, thoughtfully, and lovingly.

As you read the following pages, we also realize that all of us may have different perspectives on how we should approach reopening. That is evidenced by the roughly 180 responses to the survey whose opinions on how and when to return vary greatly. Some may desire to take an even slower approach than this one, while others may wish to see things happen more quickly. Regardless of how we may consider these matters, let's pursue love for one another and let's be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Praying for and with you,
Anthony Gammage for the Elders and Ministry Leadership Team

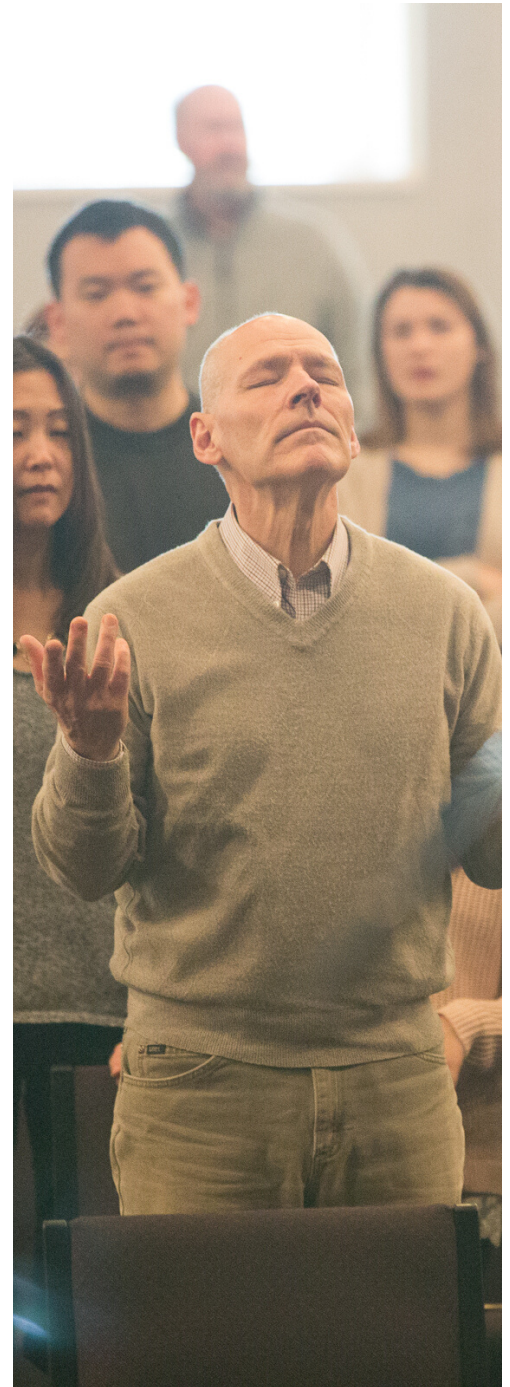


03

THE PROCESS

As leaders, we are grateful we don't have to make these decisions on our own. Instead, we have prayed, considered official guidelines, and sought the counsel of other leaders and experts. Our genuine desire is to, by God's grace, do the best we discernibly can for our community and the glory of God. Below is a summary of the process we have taken in developing a plan:

1. **Sought the Lord in prayer.** God's word instructs us that if we lack wisdom, we should ask. We have sought to do just that through regular times of prayer.
2. **Followed CDC, State, and County guidelines.** We want to submit to and follow the guidance of our authorities in deciding what steps to take, especially as it pertains to our particular geographical location.
3. **Sought counsel from our denomination and other local churches.** We have sought input from our own denominational leadership as well as pastors of other churches in the area including New Life Glenside, Cheltenham, Covenant Doylestown, and Seven Mile Road- **A big thank you for Seven Mile Road for letting us use this "opening" template!**
4. **Gathered input from numerous national and local experts.** Numerous seminars were attended by those developing this plan.
5. **Surveyed to the NLD family.** A survey was sent to our church to gauge your thoughts and plans for the future weeks. The feedback varied but was a helpful part in determining how to best move forward as a church.



04

CONSIDERATIONS

Not an immediate return to normal. We realize that COVID has changed much about how our world operates, and our church is not an exception. Even as we approach reopening, we realize that much of this will feel unusual and new. We expect this to be a progressive return; it will take time for things to feel more like what we're used to experiencing.





Each of us will have to choose what's best for us and/or our families. Our plan is to present options, but we know that each individual and family will have to make wise decisions in choosing how to move forward given their unique situation. We hope to serve each of you as best as we are able.

This situation is unpredictable. From the moment this began in March, it has been difficult to know what to expect from week to week. Everything from our emotions to the restrictions have morphed over time. We expect that to continue in the weeks and months to come, so it requires us to remain fluid.



05

SUNDAY WORSHIP & SMALLER COMMUNITIES



				
PHASES	MAX GROUP SIZE	SUNDAY SERVICE	HOME GROUPS	OTHER SMALL GROUPS
RED	0	Online	Online	Online
YELLOW	25*	Online + Small Groups	Online + In-Person**	Online + In-Person**
GREEN	Reduced Capacity***	In-Person + Online	In-Person + Online	In-Person + Online
NEW NORMAL	Full Capacity	In-Person	In-Person + Online	In-Person

*According to PA State regulations, no gatherings over 25 people are permitted

**Group leaders may use their discretion in choosing to continue online meetings or hold in-person meetings safely. We recommend that each group leader follow their local county guidelines on social distancing and health/safety protocols (links to counties found on page 14).

***During the green phase, we will be holding services at a reduced capacity based on social distancing guidelines and building capacity.

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

		
PHASES	CHILDREN	YOUTH
RED	Online Access	Online
YELLOW	Online Access	Online + Smaller Offsite
GREEN	TBD	In-Person + Online
NEW NORMAL	In-Person	In-Person

OVERVIEW OF RED PHASE

RED PHASE (over as of June 5 and hopefully continues)

This is the phase we were in since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis until June 4. All in-person gatherings were cancelled and we moved towards online Sunday worship, virtual Home Group gatherings, Zoom prayer times, and pursuing various opportunities to serve our communities.



MAX GROUP SIZE

0



SUNDAY SERVICE

Online



HOME GROUPS

Online



SMALL GROUPS

Online



CHILDREN

Online



YOUTH

Online

Living Missionally

- Share online service on social media
- Serve your community through Food Pantry, Res. Offering
- Be good neighbors
- Give

OVERVIEW OF YELLOW PHASE

YELLOW PHASE (Beginning June 5)

Our Sunday worship will continue to be offered online, but smaller groups will have the option to meet to watch the service together to discuss the service according to county guidelines. Social distancing and safety protocols will apply to all gatherings of any size.*



MAX GROUP SIZE
25



SUNDAY SERVICE

**Online +
Small Groups**



HOME GROUPS

**Online + In-
Person****



SMALL GROUPS

**Online + In-
Person**



CHILDREN
**Online
Access**



YOUTH

**Online +
Small Offsite**

Living Missionally

We are including "Living Missionally" because it is easy to only think about ourselves in seasons like these, but we want to continue to encourage New Life to look outward in the name of Jesus.

- Share online service on social media and/or gather with non-Christians for a "watch party"
- Serve your community through NLD partner ministries - See our outreach page on facebook.
- Food Pantry
- Be good neighbors
- Give

*According to PA State regulations, no gatherings over 25 people are permitted

**Small groups/Home Groups may use their discretion in choosing to continue online meetings or hold in-person meetings safely. We recommend that each group follow their local county guidelines on social distancing and health/safety protocols (links to counties found on page 14).

OVERVIEW OF GREEN PHASE

GREEN PHASE (Start Date TBD)

During this phase, New Life intends to resume in-person gatherings on Sundays while observing best practices set by CDC, State, and County guidelines. We will also offer an online option for Sunday worship for those who are not yet able to join in-person.



MAX GROUP SIZE

**Reduced
Capacity**



SUNDAY SERVICE

**In-Person +
Online**



HOME GROUPS

**In-Person +
Online****



SMALL GROUPS

**In-Person +
Online**



CHILDREN

TBD



YOUTH

**In-Person +
Online**

Living Missionally

- Share online service on social media
- Serve your community through NLD partner ministries - See our outreach page on facebook.
- Food Pantry
- Be good neighbors
- Give

**Small groups/Home Groups may use their discretion in choosing to continue online meetings or hold in-person meetings safely. We recommend that each group follow their local county guidelines on social distancing and health/safety protocols (links to counties found on page 14).

OVERVIEW OF NEW NORMAL

NEW NORMAL (Start Date TBD)

We will arrive at our new normal once we have progressed through all the phases of reopening recommended by our state and local governing officials. All gatherings and ministries will be ready to meet in-person and at full capacity.



MAX GROUP SIZE

**Full
Capacity**



SUNDAY SERVICE

**In-Person +
Online**



HOME GROUPS

In-Person



SMALL GROUPS

In-Person



CHILDREN

In-Person



YOUTH

In-Person

Living Missionally

- Invite people to attend service in-person
- Serve your community through NLD partner ministries - See our outreach page on facebook.
- Serve at gatherings
- Food Pantry
- Be good neighbors
- Give

10

FAQS

How long will each phase last? When will we be gathering in person on Sundays again?

To be honest, we don't know. This crisis is in constant flux, with many factors contributing to timing. The situation changes daily, as do concerns and needs. The start of this crisis was out of our control, and the end of it largely is as well. This will be subject to guidance from our governing officials, and subsequent decisions by Elders and Staff.

Is the government hampering our religious freedom by not allowing us to gather?

The church is a gathered people and we are like the Psalmists who express their longing to gather. And yet, we recognize that in God's providence, that has not been our reality for the past several months. However, as these restrictions and guidelines are in effect for many sectors of society, we don't believe that the Church is being persecuted or that presently we are compelled to practice civil disobedience (Acts 5). Instead, our call is to submit to our governing authorities (Rom 13). We sincerely believe that following CDC, State, and local guidelines is what is loving for both our church family, the vulnerable, & our community. We may, however, revisit this if necessary.

Why not offer in-person services when we switch to yellow phase?

Simply put, it is simply impossible for a church our size to abide by state and local guidelines of having no more than 25 people gathering at a time and gather as an entire body.

What about communion?

It currently looks like there are potential options once we get to the green phase. We are continuing to weigh these options and want to partake of communion together as soon as it is safe are able to do it in an appropriate manner.

11

FAQS

Why aren't children's church and nursery resuming at the same time as Sunday gatherings?

We love our kids and eagerly look forward to Sunday School reopening. But kids are kids! Most kids aren't able to effectively practice social distancing and other best practices. So, we will take time to determine when it is wise and safe for children's church and nursery to resume. However, Beth Anne Lesshafft, Megan Mancke and the teachers will continue to provide online content that will be available for at-home use.

What protocols/procedures will be in place when the church resumes gathering (during the green phase)?

We will continue to follow guidelines provided to us by the CDC, state, and local authorities. Some examples of protocols that we expect be in place are:

- encouraging staff or congregants who are sick to stay home
- limiting total attendance per service
- no gathering in the lobby
- use of masks
- hand sanitizer stations throughout the building
- maintaining social distancing
- one-way flow of traffic through building
- rules regarding bathroom usage
- sanitizing all high-touch surfaces between services
- prepackaged communion
- no refreshments or coffee
- shorter services

Is there a plan for cleaning and sanitizing?

In addition to our normal cleaning practices, new cleaning and sanitizing protocols in accord with CDC and PA Dept. of Health guidelines will be put into place throughout our facilities as we open. This will include sanitizing all handles, railings, seating, and other high-touch surfaces between services.

12

FAQS

When services resume, will I be able to bring my children into the service with me?

Yes! Families are certainly invited to attend our worship services as a family and sit together. If you are unable to attend, one alternative is to gather together with another family or two for a watch party. We will shorten the services to account for restless little ones and will provide ideas for keeping them engaged.

Will there be seating with distancing for services? If so, how many total seats can the auditorium accommodate?

We will arrange seating in patterns that take into account distancing measures - *At least* 6 feet apart (beside, in front, and behind). Those who live in the same home should sit together. We also encourage being considerate of how to engage and sit with those who are single in our midst during the worship service.

Does reopening open us to the chance of getting sick?

The short answer is yes. Experts speak of it as an “acceptable risk.” We need to know and acknowledge there is a risk of getting sick in reopening. We will use every wise precaution we can (following CDC guidelines, service protocols, etc) but so long as we meet in-person, there will remain a potential for us to get sick.

What will we do if someone in our community gets sick as a result of gathering?

If we are informed that someone in our community has tested positive while gathering with us, we will follow CDC guidelines which includes recommending the ill person and all who may have had contact with them to self-quarantine for 2 weeks. The privacy of the ill and those in contact will be maintained during all communication.

13

FAQS

How will we determine who attends each service when gatherings resume during the green phase?

As best as we understand, social distancing measures will remain in place during the green phase. As such, we will only be capable of accommodating approximately 120 people in our building at a time. As a result, we will need to institute a system for RSVPs for each service to ensure that we remain within attendance guidelines. We will also need to explore adding additional services.

Will New Life stop streaming online, and if so, when?

Our plan is to offer services online at least until the end of the green phase. Our plans for streaming after the green phase are still being decided.

Is there a chance we may regress in phases?

Yes. Given the ever-changing nature of this crisis, it is a possibility we could regress in phases. We will keep up to date with the guidance of state and local authorities and communicate on a regular basis where we stand as it relates to phasing.

Can these plans change?

Yes. We're all learning as we go! We're so grateful for the patience and grace you have exhibited throughout this crisis, and we can't wait to see you all as soon as we are able.

Can I use the church building for small group gatherings?

Our desire is to continue to be generous with our facilities. However, due to the rigorous cleaning and social distancing standards we must implement due to COVID-19 our ability to host groups will be limited for the foreseeable near future. Any person looking to use the building must first make a reservation and get it approved by contacting the church office

14

RESOURCES

Below you will find some helpful resources that were used in determining our plan for reopening:

1. **CDC Guidelines:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

2. **PA Guide to Reopening:**

<https://www.governor.pa.gov/process-to-reopen-pennsylvania/>

3. **Philadelphia Dept. of Health Guideline for Religious Institutions:**

<https://www.phila.gov/media/20200529131928/Guidelines-for-Religious-Institutions.pdf>

4. **Montgomery County Guide for Reopening:**

<https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/27985/Sector---Community-and-Family-Gatherings>

5. **Bucks County Coronavirus Information Page:**

<https://covid19-bucksgis.hub.arcgis.com/>

6. **New Jersey Coronavirus Information Page:**

<https://covid19.nj.gov/>

7. **The Gospel Coalition Guide to Reopening:**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cdc-document-outlines-guidance-for-reopening-of-churches/>

8. **"When Will Your Church Be Back to Normal" by Russell Moore:**

<https://www.russellmoore.com/2020/05/14/when-will-your-church-be-back-to-normal/>

9. **"Church Don't Let the Coronavirus Divide You" by Brett McCracken:**

<https://www.russellmoore.com/2020/05/14/when-will-your-church-be-back-to-normal/>