

Kensington Church's Response to the COVID-19 Situation:

Plans to Re-Open

A Letter From Danny Cox and the Executive Team

In one well known parable and teaching of Jesus he tells people how they can inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt. 25:34b-36). The fascinating part was the reaction of the people Jesus deemed righteous in this parable. They responded out of shock and asked when they did these things to Jesus. He responded by saying "^{40b}"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40b). Jesus made it clear that we, as his community of followers, are to care for the most vulnerable, sick, needy, lonely and hurting. When we do this we are living out the good news of Christ and inheriting God's blessing and the kingdom of heaven. When we love and care for those in need we are actually loving Jesus.

Since the very beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Kensington leadership has made a commitment to follow the guiding of the Holy Spirit and to make the most vulnerable in our community a priority. As an Executive Leadership Team we have gathered data from a multitude of sources and continue to monitor trends and listen to updates from our government leaders. Our decision-making, though sometimes affected by governmental laws, has not been driven by regulations. We were one of the first churches in our region, maybe the country, to close our doors and create online services. This was decided before the strict regulations were put into place. We did this by listening to what the Spirit was saying and by committing to serving our most vulnerable in our community.

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Followers of Jesus know one big truth; the church is not a building--it is the people. We did not stop being the church or worshipping God because we stopped meeting physically. In fact in some ways we have seen Kensington be the church more in these last couple months than perhaps in the months leading up to the sheltering in place mandate. I'm proud of how our community has responded and look forward to us being the church more in the future by continuing to serve those in need in our region, country and the world.

We long to gather physically in our buildings. As a pastor, I yearn to shake hands, give hugs, cry and laugh, sing and worship together in the same space. I'm confident we will do so at some point in the near future but that moment should not be one mandated by government but rather done in peace not in fear, through intentional prayer, by listening to the Spirit and taking the proper detailed precautions to ensure the safety of all involved especially our people who are immunocompromised, our precious children and our valuable older contingency. We love this community and value each and every one of you. Please be praying for us as we lead and make decisions and we promise to continue to pray for and with all of you.

Plans to Reopen From Our Task Force

We wanted to update you on the work that our church leadership has been doing over the past few weeks concerning the reopening of our campuses. Many steps have been taken by our local, state, and federal government to mitigate the severity of COVID-19. We want you to know that we are committed, above all else, to continue making decisions with prayer, wisdom, discernment, and care to maintain the safety and health of our staff and church family.

All of this will be taken into consideration as we begin the phased approach to opening our buildings and re-establishing in-person gatherings.

Our Executive Team has assembled a "Task Force" made up of staff from multiple departments, including buildings and facilities, weekend services, guest services and different campuses, human resources, communications, and security. Our Task Force is responsible for making decisions while adhering to the guidelines of the medical community, the government, and the input from the greater church community. As a part of our overall strategy and planning, we are following best practices that are being utilized by businesses and organizations worldwide.

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When we do start to phase into in-person meetings and gatherings, we will have clear policies and procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of all who use our buildings. We ask that you extend grace to one another and maintain a spirit of unity as we follow these guidelines for the good of our community, despite personal preferences. Our goal with all guidelines is to keep every member of our church family as safe as possible. As we continue to learn more about this virus, we will adjust and amend our guidelines to optimize the safety of all.

In summary, we plan to reopen in phases (staff first, then gatherings) when we are confident we can maintain the safety and health of our staff and church body. We are so grateful for your continued support and patience as we continue to navigate our next steps.