

Winter 2020-21 COVID 19 Pathways Update from Pastor Eddie

Winter is upon us and brisk temperatures are on the way. Something else on the way: vaccines for Covid-19! We are grateful to God, and to the scientists and the health care community for their work in this marvelous news. The suffering and loss endured during 2020 have exhausted people emotionally as well as physically, and the hope is that vaccines will enable America to return to some version of pre-pandemic normalcy by fall 2021.

But before we get there, we must pass through what is likely to be a dark and difficult winter. Currently, about 3000 people per day are dying due to Covid-19, and experts are beginning to predict a total loss of 400,000 to 500,000 lives in the USA before this is over. The surges of winter (with people moving more activities indoors) and post-Thanksgiving travel have already been extremely taxing on our front-line health care workers and hospitals. Governmental entities—states, counties, and health departments—are trying to figure out the best ways to at least slow the virus and limit the damage, but in many situations people are tired of restrictions and are either actively or passively resisting extending limitations.

What does this mean for Pathways and other churches across our nation? In the near term, it means that our primary method for worship and discipleship across all age groups will necessarily be online digital gatherings. We are still “open” on a limited basis for physical gatherings for worship and office functions, but all of those are conducted with best practices for protection against the spread of Coronavirus: numerical limits, masks, hand sanitizing, and physical distancing. We anticipate that this will be the case at least through Easter 2021, more likely until the fall.

At Pathways we understand that gathering together is both a biblical mandate and one of the great joys of the Christian life. Worshipping together, fellowshiping together, studying together, singing together, reaffirming our faith together—being in community TOGETHER is such a high value. We are grateful that the Supreme Court has recently issued rulings that our freedom of worship cannot be lightly or unfairly abridged even in times of crisis. BUT for us there is a higher value at work: to “love one another as I have loved you.” These words of Jesus have long been a call to loving sacrifice, of putting others first. It is in that spirit that we are choosing to limit our in-person opportunities for the present, in the hope that we might all make it safely through this time of pandemic.

In that spirit of loving others, we are in conversations with Montgomery County, the city of Gaithersburg, and various health providers to better serve our community during the pandemic. We are discussing potential opportunities for our facility and our parking lot to be used for Covid testing and perhaps even as a vaccination site in the future. Our 20877 Zip code is one of the underserved areas of the county, so we want to help if we can. We will keep the church advised as to the progress of these talks.

As always, our Staff, Deacons, and Elders remain ready to serve. We want to help and to work with our ministry partners however we can to address spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. Our missions efforts to help the children of the incarcerated, young folks and families in difficult circumstances, the poor and the hungry—all of these continue as priorities for Pathways. It is a privilege to be a part of God’s work together.

Christmas blessings to all — *Pastor Eddie*