

May 18, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters at Mohican,

I bring you greetings in the matchless name of Jesus Christ our Lord! It's been so long since we have been together in worship, and – while we have been so grateful for those opportunities to provide preaching/teaching online – we have longed for the opportunity to be back together to worship the risen Lord. We believed we were doing what was best when we 'closed' for a season in response to the COVID-19, but now we believe what is best is to open up for worship once again. We plan to gather for worship this Sunday, May 24 for both the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. worship services. If all goes well, we hope to rejoin for midweek Bible study on May 27th and resume evening worship on May 31. Best practice suggests that we do not resume coffee/fellowship hour or Sunday School at this time. We'll be passing on more details about those services soon, but the focus of this letter is to let you know what you can expect on Sunday.

This should go without saying, but if you are exhibiting any symptoms of being sick, please stay home. If you are able to do temperature checks before heading to church, that might be a great idea. If you have a fever or have had one in the past week, please stay home until you are symptom free for the recommended period of time.

When you arrive, please enter only under the portico on the south side of the church. If you normally park in the handicap parking to the west, please use the door you always do. Someone will be there to greet you with a smile (not a handshake or hug) and have the door open for you. Worship will be held in the fellowship hall, and you should expect to find half of the hall roped off. That will allow 'clean' seating for each morning worship service. The hall will be arranged with chairs sets up in groupings allowing families to sit together. Not every cluster of seats will include the same number of chairs, so please select a group appropriate to your need. The clusters of chairs will be spaced so that you can maintain social distancing. At the close of the service, everyone is asked to exit through the east doors of the fellowship hall.

A few things to know about the worship service: In order to eliminate as many 'touch surfaces' as possible and minimize contact, we will not have our traditional 'stand and greet your neighbor' time during the service. We will not have an open mic 'praise and prayer concern' time before prayer, but you are invited write your praises and concerns out and drop them in the offering box. We will have Jen email those out to the congregation on Monday morning. Rather than passing offering plates, your tithes and offerings can be placed in the offering box at the entrance to the fellowship hall when you come in.

The morning bulletin will be on the website rather than in your hands, so if you wish to know the order of service or what announcements we have you will need to visit the website(www.mohicancob.org) prior to the service. There will be no hymnals available, but lyrics will be on the screen. We are working on having plenty of hand sanitizer available, but you may wish to bring your own. The water fountain will be shut off to minimize contact, but you are welcome to bring a water bottle of your own. Ideally, restrooms will be used only for emergencies.

When the service ends, you will be encouraged to not linger long in the building, but we understand that you have longed to be back together like the rest of us. The logic behind not lingering in the building is two-fold: first, fresh air and sunshine is a safer option. Second, the group of folks readying the fellowship hall for the second service will need time to do that.

What about masks? We will allow you to make your own decision about whether you wear a mask or not. Some of you wouldn't think of coming WITHOUT a mask, and that is okay! Some of you wouldn't think of coming WITH one, and that is okay! There will, no doubt, be some folks wearing masks and some not, so if you are not comfortable being in worship with folks who are not masked we will respect your decision to remain at home until you feel more comfortable.

What about those who are not comfortable returning to church just yet? We completely respect that decision, and your pastors and deacons will be as accessible to you as we always have been. In addition, we plan to continue with our sermons online just as we have been for the past 8 weeks. We are hoping to be able to add podcasts soon for those who are simply interested in the audio version of the sermon. Some of you are in a high-risk category due to age and/or health, and we would expect that you would continue using the online options for a while.

But didn't the Governor say...? The governor never issued an order that churches had to stop meeting in person, but it was recommended and most churches complied. On May 1st he reiterated that and urged that any churches that reopened would do so in a manner as to best protect their people.

While I know that many of you are anxious to get back to church, some of you are undoubtedly surprised to see this letter come 'so soon.' If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or Pastor Chad. If it seems that we missed something important in our plan, please speak with grace when you call or text. In any case, I hope that you can respect this decision to begin getting back to some sense of normal and regain some spiritual and emotional health that comes when the Body of Christ gathers. Oh, and please - I urge you to show the utmost respect to your brothers and sisters in Christ, and I urge you to act in such a way to one another that makes it easier for your brothers and sisters to do what is right.

Soli Deo Gloria –

Pastor Paul 330-201-2448

Pastor Chad 330-466-7373