



July 16, 2020

Dear Knox Family,

Back in May, Session made a commitment to all who call Knox home to keep everyone up to date on plans for utilizing our facilities again for all that will help us fulfill our mission to, “LEARN, GROW and SERVE as followers of Jesus Christ.” It is time to give you another update based on the work of our congregation’s staff, Deacon and Session leadership.

We entered our remote life, in the very real challenge related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a three-fold commitment to:

1. do all we can, with God’s help, to broaden, deepen and grow our life and witness in these remote days;
2. stand with the best government and health leadership in our nation and state to live under best practices for the good of all;
3. model for all people how to live for the sake of others, outdoing one another in love as a faithful witness to Jesus for everyone’s health and welfare.

There is a lot to celebrate related to the ways we have faithfully carried out these three commitments! We are grateful for all our Knox family for the ways you have helped enable us to live out our distinctive calling in Jesus to be light in our world’s darkness like a city on a hill.

All of us have wondered when we might begin to move out of our physically-distanced life as it relates to the use of our wonderful facilities. Our Health Task Force has continued to accurately inform congregational leadership since the very first Sunday of our remote life. Our Restart Knox Task Force has worked diligently in the past month to cull through all directives and guidelines from a variety of reliable sources to put together sets of protocols for how we will prepare to enter the building once again and what practices will be in place to do our best to ensure the safety of every person as far as possible.

Session is the group that oversees all our ministry and has the responsibility to decide about the use of our facility. This past Monday, Session heard updates from both task forces and have decided to allow ministry to take place in our building once again, on a limited basis, starting August 1. This August restart date may be adjusted depending on how the guidance of the state and health departments might change in the weeks and months ahead.

Our Restart Knox Task Force has proposed a four-stage plan for the use of our facilities, and Session is currently operating under this plan. The stages, in their simplest form, are:

- Stage 1: limited use for church-based gatherings of 10 people or fewer—Aug. 1
- Stage 2: increased number of small gatherings as per Step 1—perhaps by Sept. 1
- Stage 3: larger gatherings up to 50-100 including worship—no specific date in mind
- Stage 4: full use of building in a “normal” fashion—no specific date in mind

Careful evaluation will take place during each stage that will inform moving to a next stage.

In Stages 1-3, all protocols related to wearing masks, physical distancing and best hygiene practices will be expected of everyone in the building at all times. No one should return to the building until totally at peace doing so with these protocols in mind. During each stage, full evaluation will be made related to what has happened during each stage in the larger community and within our ministry to see what might need to be adjusted as time goes on.

More information will be shared in the weeks ahead, and we hope that all who call Knox home will embrace the commitment we have that all people should feel safe when they return to our building. God has used our greatly expanded virtual life for all ages in amazing ways. Be assured that, whether you enter

the building anytime soon or not, in accordance with this plan, equal opportunity for ministry and mission involvement will be provided for both for those who choose to be in-person and those who continue to invest virtually.

We are very aware that feeling connected is more important than ever virtually and in-person. We trust all of Knox to invest well with one another for all of God's gracious good among us and for our neighbors. Besides the plan above for indoor gatherings on our property, please know appropriate sized groups are welcome to schedule gatherings on our grounds with state distancing guidelines in place. We are looking into possibilities that forms of worship might be offered outside. If you have ideas about connecting in meaningful ways or would like to help develop plans, let us know.

We cherish you all and look forward to all that God will enable us to be and do in the weeks and months to come.

On behalf of Session,
Pat

Rev. Dr. Patrick Smith