



June 18, 2020

Greetings, Lettered Streets Covenant Church!

I was thinking about Psalm 137.1-4 today:

*By the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat down and wept,  
When we remembered Zion.  
Upon the willows in the midst of it  
We hung our harps.  
For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
And our tormentors mirth, saying,  
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."  
How can we sing the LORD'S song  
In a foreign land?*

It's not the most encouraging Psalm, but it is real. It expresses the angst of exile in a foreign land, or in our case, a sort of exile in a familiar land. We can sing, but not together. We can worship, but not in the way we are used to.

Part of the anxiety that comes with exile is the unknown. It feels hard to make plans when you don't know what life will be like. And it's hard to accept the new normal if we keep holding on to the loss of what was at the expense of learning to thrive in what is.

As a Leadership Team and staff we want to help alleviate some of the anxiety of the unknown by formulating a strategic plan. We have been seeking input from the congregation, denominational leaders, medical and community health professionals, and government guidelines—all with the intent of trying to figure out what is best for our church and the community when it comes to gathering again for worship. It is our mandate as leaders in Christ, to make sure we are treating people justly by promoting safe, wise practices and then implementing those practices in love.

Lettered Streets Covenant Church

P.O. Box 5645 Bellingham, WA 98227

Phone 360.920.6712 • [info@letteredstreetscc.com](mailto:info@letteredstreetscc.com) • [www.letteredstreetscc.com](http://www.letteredstreetscc.com)

At this time we are recommending that we do not gather as a large group in person, inside, until Phase Four. I have attached a document called *LSCC Phased Preparedness* that outlines a very basic strategy for how our congregation will navigate Washington State's Phased Approach (\*For reference, I have also attached Washington's Phased Approach)

Please know that we will stay on the alert for new data and updated guidelines that may well help us safely move toward large group gatherings sooner. Nothing is set in stone if new, positive changes or data shed light on better practices.

While I am sad to come to terms with a longer term physical separation, I have found hope in another exilic text, the book of Jeremiah. In chapter 29 the word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah to speak to the Israelites in exile. Like us, they were disoriented, longing for the days of old when things were *normal* and *predictable*. They were stuck in their grief. But God did two things.

First, he assured them that this too would pass. And so it will. We will overcome this virus like our species has for millennia. We will be back together again. I have hope that one day we'll sing, without masks fogging up our glasses and be able to give genuine hugs. We'll share meals and laughter—in person!

Second, God gave them permission—in the form of a command—to embrace their new reality as long as it lasted. In the case of the exiles, he told them to build houses (rather than live in tents assuming they'd be home soon), to plant gardens (rather than foraging like a temporary resident would), to marry and multiply and plant roots (not something refugees on the move do). And in a similar way, this strategic plan gives us permission to accept that as long as we are apart, we can truly invest in creative ways of being a community. We can give ourselves permission to think differently about how to build relationships and serve and worship and pray. For those reluctant to participate in virtual connections, hoping for quicker change, maybe try to embrace this Covid-19 exile by focusing on what we can do, rather than what is prohibited.

To that end, I want to remind you about the film, [Just Mercy. Amazon streaming services](#) recently made this movie free to rent throughout the whole month of June in honor of George Floyd. Normally we would gather in person to discuss a film like this but in this new, temporary reality, I want to encourage you to join in a discussion via Zoom this Monday, June 22 from 6:30-8:30. There are a set of [discussion questions](#) (written by Dominique Gilliard) that we'll use to frame our discussion.

I am sure there are a range of emotions as people read the LSCC Phased Preparedness document. Some of you will be relieved. Some will be thankful there is a plan. Some may be grieved and disappointed. Others might be angry. I want to validate the wide range of emotions and thoughts you may be experiencing and I invite your constructive feedback if you would like to talk it through or get more information.

May the peace of Christ be with you,

Chris

	<b>PHASE ONE</b>	<b>PHASE TWO</b>	<b>PHASE THREE</b>	<b>PHASE FOUR</b>
<b>Sunday Worship Gatherings</b>	Worship from home or in groups via Zoom with LSCC Home Worship Resources	Phase One protocols <u>plus</u> the ability for households to add up to five others for worship	Phase Two protocols <u>plus</u> the potential of occasional outdoor gatherings and small group gatherings. *All subject to change with updated guidelines and recommendations.	Worship together as a whole congregation
<b>Kid's Church</b>	Kids join in worship with parents or guardians  LSCC provides children's worship resources	Kids join in worship with parents or guardians  LSCC provides children's worship resources	Kids join in worship with parents or guardians  LSCC provides children's worship resources	Nursery available Toddler time available Kid's Church available E-2 back together
<b>LSCC Youth</b>	Youth join in worship with parents or guardians  LSCC provides mid-week connections via Zoom	Youth join in worship with parents or guardians  LSCC provides mid-week connections via Zoom	Youth join in worship with parents or guardians  LSCC provides mid-week connections via Zoom and/or possible small group connections as per community health guidelines.	Youth (C-1) No restrictions  Youth (C-2) No restrictions
<b>Small Groups</b>	Meet via Zoom	Options: -Meet via Zoom -Meet outside -Meet in smaller groups, inside	Move toward gathering in person while remaining sensitive to those with high risk of infection by providing virtual options.	Groups back to meeting in person
<b>Community Life</b>	Congregants are encouraged to connect via Zoom or in open spaces while following Phase One protocols	Options: -Phase One protocols, <u>plus</u> : -Pastor available to meet in person -Outdoor gatherings as per Phase Two guidelines	Options: -Gatherings, picnics, worship events under 50 people	No Restrictions  Re-engage with 3-year-cycle
<b>Missional Engagement</b>	Congregants encouraged to take care of each other, neighbors, and those in their sphere of influence. Bring specific needs to the attention of the Lead Team for LSCC support	Congregants encouraged to take care of each other, neighbors, and those in their sphere of influence. Bring specific needs to the attention of the Lead Team for LSCC support	Phase Two protocols <u>plus</u> the ability for small groups to volunteer, form work parties, etc. in accordance with community health guidelines	No restrictions

# WASHINGTON'S PHASED APPROACH

## Modifying Physical Distancing Measures as we Reopen the State

INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES SHOULD FOLLOW ALL REQUIREMENTS LISTED ABOVE DURING ALL PHASES

	 <b>Phase 1</b>	 <b>Phase 2</b>	 <b>Phase 3</b>	 <b>Phase 4</b>
<b>High-Risk Populations*</b>	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Resume public interactions, with physical distancing
<b>Recreation</b>	Some outdoor recreation (hunting, fishing, golf, boating, hiking)	Outdoor recreation involving 5 or fewer people outside your household (camping, beaches, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outdoor group rec. sports activities (50 or fewer people)</li> <li>- Recreational facilities at &lt;50% capacity (gyms, public pools, etc.)</li> <li>- Professional sports without audience participation (horseracing, baseball, etc.)</li> </ul>	Resume all recreational activity
<b>Gatherings (social, spiritual)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> <li>- Drive-in spiritual service with one household per vehicle</li> </ul>	Gather with no more than 5 people outside your household per week	Allow gatherings with no more than 50 people	Allow gatherings with >50 people
<b>Travel</b>	Essential travel and limited non-essential travel for Phase I permissible activities	Essential travel and limited non-essential travel for Phase I & II permissible activities	Resume non-essential travel	Continue non-essential travel
<b>Business/ Employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Essential businesses open</li> <li>- Existing construction that meets agreed upon criteria</li> <li>- Landscaping</li> <li>- Auto/RV/boat/ORV sales</li> <li>- Retail (curb-side pick-up orders only)</li> <li>- Car washes</li> <li>- Pet walkers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remaining manufacturing</li> <li>- Additional construction phases</li> <li>- In-home/domestic services (nannies, housecleaning, etc.)</li> <li>- Retail (in-store purchases allowed with restrictions)</li> <li>- Real estate</li> <li>- Professional services/office-based businesses (telework remains strongly encouraged)</li> <li>- Hair and nail salons/barbers</li> <li>- Pet grooming</li> <li>- Restaurants/taverns &lt;50% capacity table size no larger than 5 (no bar-area seating)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restaurants/taverns &lt;75% capacity/ table size no larger than 10</li> <li>- Bar areas in restaurant/taverns at &lt;25% capacity</li> <li>- Movie theaters at &lt;50% capacity</li> <li>- Customer-facing government services (telework remains strongly encouraged)</li> <li>- Libraries</li> <li>- Museums</li> <li>- All other business activities not yet listed except for nightclubs and events with greater than 50 people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nightclubs</li> <li>- Concert venues</li> <li>- Large sporting events</li> <li>- Resume unrestricted staffing of worksites, but continue to practice physical distancing and good hygiene</li> </ul>

\* High-risk populations are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.