

# MAY 29 - COVID 19 CHURCH LETTER

As many different businesses and other organizations begin slow and careful reopening procedures around the Big Island, be encouraged that your Church Council has been hard at work, researching, praying, and planning for our eventual resumption of onsite physical activities on our property. While we don't have an exact date for safely resuming physical activities onsite yet, we are hopeful of some form of resumed onsite worship sometime this summer.

The Council will be meeting on June 8th to finalize our careful, phased-in approach to resuming church activities. Once the Council reaches a firm decision on the start date we will give the congregation and community at least two weeks of advance notice, with detailed instructions and information, so that everyone can come with the same expectations of procedures and the same, unified commitment to our safe success.

There are many things to carefully consider, first and foremost the safety of our congregation, especially the safety of our kupuna and others who are at higher risk. At the writing of this letter, we are still awaiting some final guidance from the County of Hawai'i and State of Hawai'i on physical "gathering size" guidelines for churches. A few of the many additional things we need to consider include substantial ongoing sanitizing requirements, ensured physical distancing of those gathering together, ensured mask-wearing by all participants, adequate signage, etc.

We are being very thorough and careful as we create a long-term, phased-in approach to resume onsite activities. We hope to be able to settle on some specific plans at our June 8th Council meeting. Then, we will begin to communicate those plans to the congregation as quickly as possible after that. Whenever the Council does make the decision to resume physical worship opportunities we (Pastor Greg and President Knut) currently expect to begin with an "outdoor" and "no-touch" approach. We anticipate utilizing the paved portion of the parking lot for seating and the gravel portion of the parking lot for parking. We anticipate asking participants to bring their own lawn or beach chair from home to use and take back home when worship is done. We anticipate requiring all participants to wear masks while on the property and to maintain six feet of distance between different households. We are working on appropriate signage and ground markings plans to guide participants on where to walk and where to sit. We are working on an outdoor stage and sound system solution as well. This outdoor approach will allow approximately 80-120+ seats while still maintaining six-foot distances between all family units.

It is true that this approach will have potential weather issues to contend with at times (rain and wind). This may require occasional cancellation of onsite physical worship. However, outside, no-touch worship definitely offers the safest solution for minimal sanitizing needs, and the best ventilation and safe distancing option for us to meet as one large group. By contrast, meeting inside the sanctuary would limit us to 27-38 people per service (at the most) and would require significantly more sanitizing efforts by many more volunteers.

In the meantime, we will continue our highly attended and very effective "online worship" options. These will continue even after physical gatherings have resumed. We are investigating some additional technology solutions to allow us to continue to "Livestream" our eventual onsite physical worship experiences with the same high quality our pre-recorded versions have been providing. This way, if you are sick, concerned that you might be sick, or concerned for your own safety, you can stay home, yet still participate fully (in real-time) as part of our church, while simultaneously protecting yourself and others. With all that in mind, we need your help this week with our planning. Please read the following questions and send an e-mail response to waikoloacc@gmail.com with your answers. We will also be sending this list of questions out in a separate email this week as an extra reminder. Please respond by June 6th so that we have your input in time for the June 8th Council meeting. We appreciate you and value your thoughts and feelings.

## **CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY**

- 1) What do you miss most about church life right now?
- 2) When is the soonest you would consider coming back to the church property for worship and other events?
- 3) What would you want to see happen before you would comfortably return for worship, Bible studies, other group events?
- 4) If the church requires mask-wearing, physical distancing, and no-touch greetings to participate would you still attend and abide by those requirements?
- 5) If we resumed physical gathering activities in the next few months, would you volunteer to serve in your same spot?
- 6) If not currently volunteering, would you be willing to volunteer in a new spot (such as cleaning, or setting up/tearing down equipment, maintenance needs, etc.)?

Mahalo for your input as we work diligently to make these plans.

*Pastor Greg Scott and President Knut Hovde*