

2020

Lewisville Baptist Church

# PLAN TO PROGRESS

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## How Did We Get Here? Intro



Well, what a journey we've been on! To be honest, we're all running out of hyperbole to open communication like this. It seems like every email, video and phone call starts with words like "strange, unprecedented, uncertain" these days.

When we started all this, we had a decision to make about one Sunday. Do we cancel our services this week, March 15. We had planned to launch our building fundraising campaign that day, and we agonized over that decision. We didn't know at that time that we'd be having a conversation days later about postponing in-person gatherings for 30 days.

As we scrambled to transition the entirety of our ministry to an online environment we thought to ourselves, "What a strange month this will be!". As we progressed through those early weeks, we began to hear rumblings of all this potentially lasting into May. We all stared at each other in disbelief, almost unable to take that in. Now here we sit with the month of May well in the rear view mirror and almost uncomfortably familiar with what life and ministry looks like in this environment.

At this stage, we're going to provide a bit of an update with regard to how things have gone thus far, and more importantly, talk about our plans and intentions for the coming days, weeks, and months.

## Church Online

Our transition to online ministry was something to behold. Our team revamped our entire web presence to reflect an online environment in a matter of days. Our worship and technical crew planned and executed a standard of online worship leading that quickly lifted us out of our fears of separation and pulled us into a shared experience of the Glory of God, even while sequestered in our own homes. Our kids and youth leadership quickly began executing online environments for our younger folks and their families with excellence and, most importantly, a high degree of care. Administratively, our team pivoted into this new world with agility, flexibility and excellence, securing available funds and resources and updating systems to support the new reality in earnest.

To analyze the experience and the interaction is a bit of a challenge and there's very little to compare it to. That said, we've been pleased to see the way folks have connected during this season. Our total video ministry - including Sundays, Kids Ministry and others - has averaged approximately 2800 views per month. Our Sunday Service videos average about 350 views each as they remain archived and available. Our live Sunday experience has averaged around 125-150 individual logins between the two services. We also know that those numbers don't tell the whole story, and many of them represent more than one person watching together. Many of the experts' best guesses suggest that a factor of 2.2 is a reasonable formula. That being the case, we can surmise that upwards of 700 people are viewing our weekly experiences, with over 300 joining us live on Sunday mornings. How great to imagine that cloud of witnesses we're part of even while physically apart! We thank God that in all this He has seen fit to enable us to continue to be the body of Christ for His glory, even in this moment.

## Church Online (cont.)

These are all positives to take away from this season, but they are not meant to discount the real difficulties that remain. Our corporate value of “Better Together” stands, and we still believe that is best expressed in the gathered, in-person body of Christ. We grieve its loss in this moment. We acknowledge the many-faceted ways in which this has been uniquely challenging. Our approach has been to acknowledge this loss and lean into an alternative, rather than simply attempt to recreate it. We want to leave space for what we love about being together and value it by not pretending it is easily replaced. We are believing and praying for the day when our togetherness is unencumbered and free. We’re asking God to show us what we’ve taken for granted and to steel our resolve for what matters most - to birth in us a renewed vision for the future. We firmly believe we will not be “going back” to what was, but rather “moving forward” into what is next for our community and ministry.





## Our Approach

In discussing their plans for the future, Pastor John Mark Comer said to his Portland, Oregon congregation, "It's our desire to do not just what is legal, but what is wise,". This is a deeply resonant statement and captures the tone of our plans for the weeks and months to come.

We have been driven by a mission to serve our community and fascinate those around us with practical demonstrations of God's love. We intend to do no less as we grapple with our future plans. Our governing mission is to make choices and take action that demonstrate love and care for our neighbours and that value and make space for the least of these and the most vulnerable in our communities - even at a cost to our individual comfort and preferences.

We want to be responsible community members and heed the advice of our community leaders. We're grateful for their efforts and we continue to pray for them as they navigate decisions no one ever expected them to be faced with. No leader is perfect, but we believe the best in them and want to enable their difficult task by offering our support wherever possible. They have provided us all with clear direction as to how things in our society will progress as each stage of this journey arrives. We're all very familiar with the colour coded regulations and recommendations at this point. The challenging question for us at each stage has been, "What does this mean for churches?"

The answer to that question isn't necessarily clear cut, and is likely to be expressed differently by each congregation. We're cheering on our sister churches as they wrestle with their own plans, and we support them all as they make the best choices they can for their own flock and community, no matter how different each instance may be.

## Considerations



There are many angles from which to consider our progression through all this, not the least of which is the remaining uncertainty surrounding timelines and medical innovation. While our regulators have begun to open the door for restricted gatherings of a certain size, the comfort level of society at large to do so varies to a great degree. A recent poll by The Gloop Group shows little consensus in Canada. 25% of people indicate they're unsure when they'll be comfortable returning to in-person gatherings, if at all. An additional 30% said they'd rather worship at home and only return when they can be unencumbered and mask-free at church. Tony Morgan, a church leadership guru, indicated that his conversations with churches beginning to open up in the U.S. have shared they are experiencing attendance as low as 15-20% of what they would have had pre-pandemic.

We long to be together as much as anyone, and we will be. That said, we've espoused a mantra of sorts for some time now, which states, "Wherever we're going, we're going together." This has guided us through choices surrounding worship expression, ministry and programming, and life at large at Lewisville. Life at Lewisville is about everyone. With this in mind, we're faced with the short-term prospect of strange gatherings, restricted in size, spaced out over large swaths of time, cramped by safety regulations, and even the discouragement of singing. The summary question covering it all is essentially, "What does a win look like when it comes to our return to in-person services?". It's not an easy answer.

## Considerations (cont.)

The answer our leadership has arrived at through much prayer and consideration is that for Lewisville, a win means getting together for in-person worship services when we can truly be together - all of us. When regulations allow for the gathered body to do so without the weight and pressure of intense safety measures; when the stakes aren't so high; when each one of us feels confident to do so.

With that in mind, we'd like to share with you Lewisville's Plan to Progress. We've mirrored our Province's colour-coded system to express our plans for moving forward into a new day. It features three stages: **Mitigation**, **Progress**, and **Renewal**.



# LEWISVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

## MOVING FORWARD: A PLAN TO PROGRESS

MITIGATION

- All Programming Online
- Facility Closed to Public
- Staff Working Virtually

MAX 0  
GATHERING

PROGRESS

- Regular Programming/Groups Online
- Potential for Outdoor Special Events
- Staff Working Virtually and In Person As Needed

MAX 10  
GATHERING

- Regular Programming/Groups Online
- Some In-Person Groups, Meetings, Events, Administration
- Staff Working Virtually and In Person As Needed

MAX 50  
GATHERING

RENEWAL

- Renewed Worship Services in Person with Online Companion
- Renewed Weekly Programming in Person with Online Companion
- Facilities Open to Public with New Safety Precautions

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- All phases to include safety guidelines and distancing as recommended
- Mitigation and Progress Phases will follow Public Health timeline
- Renewal Phase enacted within reasonable period after removal of Public Health restrictions (ie vaccine, community immunity)





## The Plan (cont.)

It's important to note that the bulk of this discussion has surrounded the touchstone of in-person Sunday worship services. While a large part of who we are and what we do, these services are only a piece of the puzzle of what it means to be a church family and community. This plan includes and leans on concerted efforts for us to be together as a community in other ways. We're looking to special events, groups, bubble gatherings and other innovative expressions that remain to be discovered and innovated. All the while, we will continue to lean into the advantages and positives of our new online environment.



## Feedback

We've referred to the driving force of our values in this plan, specifically the concept of being "**Better Together**". Another key value for us in this time will be this: "**Grace Must Win**".

There is no plan or set of decisions here that will be a perfect fit for each individual's perception or preference. There's also no plan we could make that would be exempt from the need for flexibility and change. But what we're all being asked is to commit together, for the greater good, to a plan to progress into the next season of what God has in store for Lewisville - together. To lean into the opportunities we're presented with, different as they may be; to leave our comfort zones and step into innovation; to show our support for one another by our participation; to look out for one another and demonstrate God's love and grace to the world around us by how we treat each other.

We welcome your questions, your comments, even your concerns. We're in this together and your voice has value. You're welcome to reach out to leadership by visiting [lewisvillebaptistchurch.com/contact-us](https://lewisvillebaptistchurch.com/contact-us). You can call the church office and we'll connect you with leadership to have a conversation.

**We're so grateful for the patience, the grace, and most importantly the trust you've shown as we've walked the floor of the Red Sea together. We covet your continued prayer for each staff member and their families, for our Deacons Board, for our volunteers, and for each member of our church community. We believe God will continue to part the waters and show us the way as we follow Him each step of the way.**

