



Greetings LCC Members and Friends!

Given Illinois' declaration of Phase 3 reopening (May 29), we wanted to provide perspective on how our local ministry plan will align with scheduled State Phased guidance and best practice.

Stewarding local ministry through the "5 Stages of Reopening IL" requires wisdom, knowledge, and prayer. When wisdom falters we always have prayer! The Council / Leadership Team has prayed, listened, discerned, evaluated many outside resources, and constructed a basic framework / philosophy which outlines how we will begin to physically gather. We call it the "Continuing A Loving Ministry" (CALM) framework. CALM seeks to be faithful, cautious, disciplined, and loving to our *whole* community, while ensuring that LCC ministry remains vibrant and fully accessible. Your input has been essential, so please continue to share your own discernment with us at [leadership@covchurch.org](mailto:leadership@covchurch.org)

We also encourage you to watch the following video for more context from our Chair, Paul Hawkinson:

<https://www.loom.com/share/4d60e5dc08ba4f3e8b9af74975e65f94>

At the core, we have tried to be good stewards of your trust in us - prayerfully discerning what is "ministry essential" vs. "inconvenient". We have also been mindful of the substantial number of LCC members and friends that carry heightened risks associated with infection. We have considered minimum levels of future physical gatherings that will best serve our ministry. Lastly, this obviously remains a highly volatile period in Northern Illinois, with Chicago having delayed Phase 3 until June 3rd, and Southern Wisconsin "wide open" and experiencing increased levels of infection. We will be closely monitoring all data, State guidance and best practice - updating and communicating the CALM framework regularly as we move forward - together!

### Core Commitment

One of our Core Values at LCC is **Community**. We recognize that some will (rightfully) not physically gather even when fully permitted by the State. Our core commitment has been - and will continue - that we encourage and affirm each other's' personal discernment and yet **will not lose connection with each other in full community**. To that end, even when physical participation is fully permitted, we will continue to offer a virtual / hybrid model of all worship, as well as other ministry activity that lends itself to being streamed online. We anticipate this "hybrid" access / commitment to extend through December 31<sup>st</sup> at least. This commitment also allows us to retain access to more distant friends who have been able to reconnect with LCC - a wonderful surprise during this difficult time. The Deacons recent launch of a "virtual coffee hour" is a wonderful example of the ways in which we can be creative in sustaining community. We will also further invite the creativity of all ministry teams in developing additional virtual ministry connections for those who feel it best to remain home.

### **Phase 3 Implications for LCC (May 29 – June 26<sup>th</sup> \*)**

Illinois' Phase 3 declaration began on May 29. While State guidance now allows physical gatherings of 10 or less (with social distancing and best practice fully in place), we have decided to continue our current ministry approach, with no material changes visible at LCC. We will continue to direct an entirely virtual ministry through this critical Phase, while we monitor activity around us, and wait for Phase 4 (\*as early as June 26th). Staff will retain personal discretion to return to church or continue virtually from home. We will remain in full compliance with all Phase 3 guidance, with no more than 10 people in the building at any time, and compliance with all recommended safety protocols.

Therefore, for Phase 3, there will simply be no LCC-organized, in-person ministry. This obviously cannot (and should not) preclude small groups of members / friends from gathering on their own. We simply encourage compliance with all local guidance, and a deep sense of caution during this critical “bridge” period. All LCC ministry - including Worship, small groups, youth / children's ministry, and ministry team meetings will continue in virtual form. We will also use this time to complete final evaluation of detailed protocols for future physical gatherings - inclusive of policies for cleaning, social distancing, PPE, as well as important Worship protocols for communion, offering, greeting and singing.

### **Phase 4 Implications for LCC (Current Discernment, June 26<sup>th</sup>\* -)**

In the coming weeks, we will closely monitor progress toward Phase 4 (anticipated as early as June 26). State guidance will then allow well-structured gatherings of 50 or less. Even in this next Phase, our CALM framework anticipates that we will continue to offer virtual options for all ministries, while also beginning to allow appropriately structured physical gatherings of 25 or less (representing 50% of expected state guidance for Phase 4). An initial limit of 25 will allow discernment and flexibility for virtually all small groups, youth gatherings, outreach ministries and team meetings, while also providing a more controlled environment to adhere to high quality safety protocols.

Additionally, we will encourage Phase 4 ministry gatherings to take place outdoors as much as possible, as evidence continues to point to much lower risk of outside transmission. As always, we will provide hybrid / virtual access for an extended period and will continue to encourage high risk individuals (and those displaying any symptoms whatsoever) to continue full participation, virtually.

The Phase 4 CALM framework will be scaled / amended as more data becomes available. We are hopeful that later this Summer we may even have the privilege of gathering in well-structured groups, for Worship and celebration “on the hill”. What a joy that would be!

The timing of Phase 5 is simply too distant to predict - but will reflect a much more “normal” form of gathering, though some protocols may remain in place.

Again, this overall CALM framework, as approved by Council / LT, will be handed to each ministry team for further detailed visioning within the specific ministry area.

### **In It Together**

Friends, we are Covenant people, and therefore we are “In It Together”. As leaders and shepherds of the flock our task is to protect, feed, and care for the *whole* church. Continue to be in prayer - for us, our congregation, our local / global ministry partners, and for each other as we journey together during this remarkable time. We give thanks to God for you, and we trust you will find this framework helpful.