

The Well's Re-Gathering Roadmap

*"...I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete."
-2 John 12*

In John's second letter, the apostle expresses his deep desire to gather with his brothers and sisters in person to experience the joy of the fellowship of believers. Many of us have a new appreciation for John's words. The time we have spent apart has been difficult for all of us, and we long to meet together again soon. This "Re-Gathering Roadmap" is intended to provide a way forward for our congregation to begin to meet again in person. While we long for the fellowship of our congregation, we are also charged as believers to love and care for each other and for our community. With these priorities in mind, the pastors and elders of The Well have chosen to move forward in 4 distinct phases, each allowing for us to gather in increasing numbers with our church. The process below will permit us to take concrete steps towards normal gatherings while being mindful of the welfare of our church and our city.

Additionally, this incremental approach to re-opening our physical gatherings will hopefully allow time for the state of Texas to move into the next phase of guidelines/recommendations for safely reopening church gatherings. While the governor's office has listed churches as "essential services" which gives us the latitude to meet in person immediately, they have also issued some strong recommendations for how churches should meet safely during this time. These recommendations include steps like masks and gloves for all volunteers, mandatory hand-washing and masks for all in attendance, social distancing between each family unit, sanitizing between each services, as well as significant requirements for the safe care of children in our nursery and elementary classes. Following these recommendations would severely limit our worship capacity in our current building, and would prove to be real drawbacks to the advantages of being able to meet in person. We hope that by the time our plan allows for us to gather again for centralized worship that many of these guidelines will have been relaxed or deemed unnecessary.

Please note, this roadmap is only intended to serve as a guideline for us during this next season. Our pastors and elders will continue to labor in prayer and consult with community leaders, medical professionals, and other churches as we move forward. This plan and its execution may be modified as the situation develops.

Phase 1: Intimate Discipleship & Fellowship Gatherings (groups smaller than 10)

- This might look like a small group of men or women gathering in the back yard or a couple of families getting together for dinner.
- These intimate gatherings can help you connect with some of the people in your Gospel Community on a deeper level. We are praying these times will be used to encourage, challenge, speak truth, and pray for one another.
- Some of our men's and women's leaders have created a document with ideas and questions to help you use this time well to encourage and disciple one another in these small gatherings. You can find these resources [by clicking here](#).
- We encourage you to add these gatherings to your calendar so you can easily see who you've met with and when. This will help you know who you need to notify should you or someone in your family become sick or become aware of direct exposure with someone who is confirmed to have covid-19.
- Worship services will continue to be provided only in online format.
- Phase 1 begins immediately

Phase 2: Weekly Worship and Gathering with Gospel Communities (groups up to ~25)

- Gospel Communities will be permitted to resume in-person gatherings during this phase, though GC members who are at higher risk should continue to refrain from in-person gatherings.
- GC's that opt to begin meeting in person may choose to worship together using The Well's online service. We will work with GC leaders to provide additional resources (kids activities, worship guides, communion elements, etc.) to facilitate worship in this setting.
- On a case-by-case basis, some GC's may need to modify meeting time or location to accommodate the needs of the group.
- We will provide safety guidelines for GC's to include good practices and procedures to help keep folks safe.
- All GC's will be asked to keep an attendance record of all present at each GC gathering.
- Anyone who cannot attend worship through a GC gathering will still be able to view The Well's online worship service through the website.
- Phase 2 will begin once Abilene has had 2 weeks of stable or declining rates of Covid-19 cases in Abilene without significant rebounding. GC Leaders will be given no less than 10 days notice before Phase 2 begins.

Phase 3: Mid-Sized Worship Gatherings (groups of around 75-100)

- At this phase, we will begin to offer centralized worship services in addition to normal GC gatherings. These gatherings will still be much smaller than the standard attendance capacity for past services at The Well. Members and attenders who are at higher risk should continue to refrain from in-person gatherings.
- These services may be organized around different times or locations depending on attendance, gathering size, and sanitation requirements.
- Gospel Communities may be asked or may choose to attend a specific service together.
- Families will worship together during this phase. There will not be any separate nursery care, elementary, or student activities during these services. Kids activities will be provided for children to use during the worship service.
- Worship will be led live at each service. Sermon may be live-streamed via video if simultaneous services are held in separate locations.
- Anyone who cannot attend one of these worship services will still be able to view The Well's online worship service through the website.
- Phase 3 will begin after 28 days of stable or declining rate of cases in Abilene without significant rebounding. Members of The Well will be notified no less than 2 weeks before Phase 3 services begin.

Phase 4: Traditional Worship gatherings (60%-100% capacity of our worship space)

- Phase 4 permits us to offer Sunday worship together in a format that most of us will recognize as a pre-pandemic normal.
- Services will meet in our worship space at regular times to accommodate attendance.
- Members, attenders, and guests will be free to choose any service to attend.
- Some precautions may remain in place (distribution of communion elements, moderate reduction of worship service capacity, availability of hand sanitizer, etc.)
- Separate nursery, elementary and student classes will begin during this phase. New procedures will be in place to protect our children.
- One of the biggest challenges The Well faces in moving into Phase 4 will be the limitations of our current facility. Our current space has served us well in the past, but we had already grown beyond its ability to provide for our needs as a community. Specifically, our current facility may pose hurdles to our ability to care well for our children as we move out of this season.

- Phase 4 is likely to begin only after a sustained period of minimal new cases and after consultation with medical and community professionals. We may also watch AISD's decisions with regard to in-person schooling to determine best practices.

In all of these gatherings, we encourage you to practice wisdom and care when deciding whether you should participate. If you or anyone in your family is sick, out of love and respect for others, please remain at home. If you or someone in your family is in a "high-risk" category, please do not feel any pressure to attend the live gatherings.

We know that many of you may have questions or concerns about this plan. Please reach out to us by emailing info@thewellabilene.com so that we can respond directly. We'd also ask that you continue to pray for our elders, our church, and our community as we move through this next season together.