

Reopening FBC Rockport: Phase One

The staff of FBC Rockport is working with appropriate church leaders to make decisions about how and when to “reopen” the church. Remember that the church is not closed, but the way we live out being the church has changed during the quarantine. Therefore, the discussion is about when and how to reopen the church building to groups meeting together for worship, Bible Study, fellowship, and more. These decisions will be made after much prayer, in a dialogue with church leaders, and based on four sources of guidance:

1. Guidance from the White House. The President of the United States has given a broad, three-phase plan for reopening our country. It can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/.

2. Guidance from the Governor of the State of Texas. Governor Abbot and the Texas Attorney General updated their guidelines for places of worship on April 27, 2020. It can be found at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/images/admin/2020/Press/Third%20Revised%20AG%20Guidance%20for%20Houses%20of%20Worship%20During%20the%20COVID-19%20Crisis%20-%20Final.pdf>.

Governor Abbott’s plan for opening Texas can be found at <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/OpenTexas-Report.pdf>.

3. Guidance from our leaders and officials in Aransas County. FBC Rockport has always cooperated with our local officials and will continue to do so. The goal is to be part of a larger effort in Aransas County to act responsibly when we bring people together, to follow all health precautions and sanitizing guidelines, and to protect the most vulnerable among us. Pastor Scott serves on the Aransas County Economic Recovery Task Force and has been in contact with area leaders and churches.

4. Guidance from our sister Baptist churches in South Texas and across the country. All the ministerial staff are in ongoing discussions with other ministers as to how to proceed during these unusual times.

The guidance from the White House suggests a three-phase plan that moves from greater to lesser restrictions over time depending on the spread of the virus in communities. Governor Abbott described in his plan how Phase One begins on May 1 and will run through approximately May 18. He wants to have two weeks of data to confirm there is no spread of COVID-19 before he moves Texas into Phase Two. However, if there is an increase in the hospitalization rate or death rate in Texas, Governor Abbott could place us back in quarantine.

Please be advised that there is no scenario in which FBC Rockport simply opens and things are immediately the way they used to be. Reopening the church will involve various stages in which we move from observing many restrictions to having fewer restrictions. The reason is to keep everyone safe while also finding ways to bring people together again. There is no way to know how long this process will take. We will follow the guidance of our elected leaders.

Phase One for FBC Rockport:

Whereas...

- Governor Abbott has asked churches to continue to worship online when able, and
- Governor Abbot has asked that we strive to protect the vulnerable (which includes those who are 65 and older, the immunocompromised, etc.), and
- Discussions with the church staff, the Life Group leaders, and the age group ministry leaders reveal that, at least for now, people would prefer to wait to gather at the church until there are fewer restrictions for us to follow,

Therefore, FBC Rockport will continue to meet online until we receive further guidance from the State of Texas and our local leaders about what Phase Two restrictions will be and when we may begin.

That means:

- Sunday morning worship will continue to be live streamed at 10 a.m. on Sundays.
- Wednesday night Bible Study will be live streamed at 6 p.m. Wednesdays,
- Daily Devotionals, many of our Life Groups and age group ministries will continue the schedule they have been following. You should contact your Life Group or ministry leader for more information on those meetings.
- All other ministries and in-person meetings will be cancelled or rescheduled while we remain in Phase One.

Church Office: As part of Phase 1, beginning May 4 the church office will be open from 10 am – 12 pm Monday through Friday. Please call before you come so we can be expecting you. The front door will remain locked during this time to assure social distancing restrictions. All visitors should wear a face mask. These are painful requirements within the church family but is the only way to ensure the safety of our members.

Should your Life Group, committee, or ministry decide to meet at the church during Phase One, please contact Jeff Lanningham and he will arrange a time and place for you to gather safely. You will be asked to follow our guidelines:

- Not all groups will be allowed on the campus at the same time in order to protect the vulnerable and to follow the 50% capacity limitations given by Governor Abbott.
- No group, ministry, or class may use the building without coordinating with the church office. This is to help us know what parts of the building have been sterilized and are, therefore, safe to use. The more people are in the different parts of the building, the more work it creates for John, our custodian.
- Groups will need to enter and exit near the rooms in which they gather. We ask that no one move freely about the building so we can keep track of which areas are safe to use.
- No childcare will be available.
- No group may have food or drinks (including coffee!).
- Every person entering the building will need to sanitize his or her hands. We ask that each person entering the building wear a mask for the protection of others.
- Those in the immediate family or household may sit together. Otherwise, all people will need to stay six feet apart.
- Spaces used should be sanitized thoroughly after each meeting. Groups that meet should have someone in charge of doing this. The church can provide supplies.