

Why Open Now?

- **We believe we can have live services that are safe.**
 - If we believed we couldn't have services that follow the governmental guidelines we wouldn't open. But, we believe we can have a worship service and follow the health guidelines even though we may need to not have all aspects of a "normal" service right off the bat.
- **Increasing mental health issues in America.**
 - We believe that gathering together as a church family is essential for the emotional and spiritual well-being of our people. Hospitals are reporting increases in overdoses, alcohol poisoning and suicide attempts as the pandemic continues. Over the weeks, we have seen our prayer requests get worse and worse with mental health issues. We believe part of the solution is reopening the church.
- **Arizona COVID-19 numbers have shown a steady decrease since late June.**
 - All of the COVID-19 metrics have shown a decrease since the spike in June. The number of new COVID-19 cases, deaths, hospitalizations and percentage of positive tests are all steadily trending down.
 - Most hopefully, our R_t number is .92, which is one of the lowest rates in the nation. This number reflects how fast a disease is spreading (you want this number to be under one, if possible). This number was at 1.25 in May.
- **Churches across America have found ways to open safely.**
 - A recent survey quoted by Ed Stetzer said that 71% of churches in America have reopened for live services. The highest "estimate" of COVID-19 cases coming from church services is 1,000. While this seems like a large number, compared to the 4,749,000 people who were infected somewhere else, the number is minuscule.
- **We waited to see if other churches could open safely.**
 - We waited for other churches, especially other large churches, to open so we could both glean what to do and what not to do. We also wanted to see if it could be done safely. We have learned a lot and believe we can open in a safe manner.

- **Attending live worship services are vital for a person's well-being.**
 - Gathering together for church is incredibly important for people and science backs this idea up. Study after study shows that Christians who regularly attend church live longer, are happier, and feel less alone than Christians who don't. To quote one study which looked at 6,000 adults:

“One possible explanation for the later-in-life boost that worship seems to bring,” says study lead author Joanna Orr, a doctoral candidate in the School of Medicine at Trinity, “is that worshipping with others and the ‘increased social and emotional support from one's religious social networks’ can combat the isolation of living alone.”

Orr's study, published in *Research on Aging* in July, found that social connectedness was one of the most important predictors of mental health and well-being in those she studied. Congregants who valued their religion but did not regularly attend services had poorer mental health.

“There are also some possible nonsocial, psychological benefits of regularly attending worship services, including an increased ability to cope with stress,” Orr notes.