



Covenant Living Special Update **Terri Cunliffe / April 24, 2020**

Hello, I'm Terri Cunliffe, President and CEO of Covenant Living.

Can you believe it was seven weeks ago when I recorded my first message to residents and employees about how Covenant Living was preparing for the potential impact of the coronavirus?

At that time, we were implementing our first operational changes to prevent the spread of the virus. Well, those changes continued, bringing us to where we are today ... with no visitors ... health screenings and temperature checks upon arrival to our communities ... and no-touch meal deliveries to your home. But we weren't alone in these actions. Across the country, non-essential businesses have shut down ... stay-at-home orders have been put in place ... and face masks have become an essential tool in preventing the spread of germs.

This weekly journey started with worry and uncertainty as we wrestled with the impact of the virus and how long it would last. In April, we shifted our attention to the God of all comfort and the hope of Easter. But throughout the pandemic, we have submitted ourselves to God's will, because he is good ... always in control ... and has a purpose for everything – even if you can't see it today.

Please continue to pray for the residents and staff at all of our communities. At this point, eight of our communities have been impacted by the coronavirus. Most have experienced only a handful of cases, with the exception of Windsor Park.

Looking Forward

Today, we look forward to the reopening of our country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in partnership with the White House, have released a set of guidelines for the journey ahead, entitled "The Opening of America Again." This plan outlines a three-phase approach to guide state and local governments through the process of re-opening our communities and businesses. The timing for reopening is based on when the data shows a downward trend in positive COVID-19 cases in a specific market area. We can expect the reopening of our communities to vary based on individual market areas. This phased approach is intended to mitigate the risk of resurgence and to protect the most vulnerable. Reopening won't happen quickly and will take weeks, if not months, before we begin to get back to "normal".

I read in the New York Times earlier this week "it took just a matter of days to shut down New York City. Restarting will take much, much longer."

That resonated with me, because that is also the case for Covenant Living. It took only a couple of weeks to change our service practices, but it will take months to restart the programs and services to come close to what it was before coronavirus, while continuing to protect residents and employees from new virus outbreaks in our communities.

Even as we begin to re-open services, the coronavirus is still active in the cities and states where you live, which means the risk of getting the virus will continue, so it will be important for us to open slowly and carefully, while maintaining many of the practices currently in place such as visitor restrictions and health screenings.

As I read through the CDC guidelines, it isn't until the third and last phase when "vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions while still practicing physical distancing." Throughout the first two phases, the CDC guidelines clearly state that vulnerable adults should continue to shelter in place. All of our residents fall into the "vulnerable adult" category.

Covenant Living Planning

Covenant Living leadership has already met to discuss our approach to reopening using the CDC guidelines. In addition, we are reviewing Federal and State guidelines when determining the best approach to a slow and careful reopening. Because we operate in nine different states, each state or local government will have their own date when the "shelter in place orders" are lifted. We cannot start reopening a community until after the shelter in place orders have been lifted by state or local governments.

Consistent with CDC guidelines, Covenant Living will also apply the three-phase approach to reopening in a responsible and precautionous manner. You should expect the no visitors rule at skilled nursing and assisted living to remain in place. I know this is very challenging for those of you who have a spouse or close friend in healthcare but this truly is the most vulnerable population. We will continue to conduct health screenings and temperature checks for everyone entering our communities and we will continue to follow physical distancing guidelines of 6' or more. Even in the re-opening, life will not be "normal".

Phased Approach

At this point, in this first phase you won't see significant changes to our operational or service practices from what is currently in place. There will be no changes to the practices in place at skilled nursing or assisted living. Within residential living, we will continue with home delivered meals, but we are considering reopening bistros for carry-out only. The specifics of how this will work will be provided at the time we communicate our date to begin the phase 1 reopening plan.

For those of you, like me, hair care is a big deal. Depending on the guidelines and timeline established by the state or local government in your area, we will consider opening our community salons with a limited schedule and requirements.

Additionally, for residential living, we know you miss your loved ones. We are exploring modified restrictions for immediate family with limited visiting hours and no overnight visits. However, they will be required to go through the health and temperature screening upon entry and could be refused if they don't pass. I'm sure these visits will require all family members to wear masks in common areas on their way to and from your apartment and we will discourage lingering in common areas. No matter what, you still need to maintain physical distancing practices – even with your family.

In addition, we are considering re-starting individual residential living sales tours for prospective new residents – who will also be required to wear masks.

Remember, none of this can begin in your community until the “shelter in place order” has been lifted by your state or local government. We will monitor those dates regularly.

As time evolves, we will slowly and methodically begin into the second phase with services such as dining with limited seating, fitness centers and pools could reopen.... And we may begin limited transportation services for grocery trips. Based on current CDC guidelines, vulnerable adults should still shelter in place – even in phase two.

And finally as we get to phase three... this could be where we resume services and programming similar to “pre-coronavirus”. Again, this phased approach will take time... but it is a move in the right direction we've all been praying for – an opportunity to do what we do best... socialize... but now 6' apart!!

No matter the phase of re-opening, if we experience increased cases of coronavirus at any point, we may be required to “lockdown” again.

Throughout all of these phases, there remains the factor of personal responsibility. Physical distancing of at least 6 feet and continuing to wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap, not touching your face, not gathering in large groups and staying home if you are coughing, sneezing or not feeling well.

It is critical that we approach each phase in a slow and methodical way to maintain our overall goal of preventing the entry or spread of the virus into your community. The health and safety of our residents and employees remains our first priority.

This is just a snapshot of what is to come in the next few weeks and months. As we learn more about the timing for reopening in your area, you will hear more details from your executive director of how reopening will be managed. I know many of you interact with your friends living in other Covenant Living communities, so don't be surprised if your community re-opening is earlier or later than another Covenant Living location. It will all depend on the direction we receive from your state or local government.

I believe the upcoming weeks or months while we go through the reopening process may be the most challenging we've faced. It will require a generous amount of patience and personal responsibility to both adhere to the guidelines within each phase while maintaining the health and safety of residents and employees.

Patience is a Virtue

Patience is a virtue and talked about throughout the bible in the old and new testaments. Being patient is a vital part of trusting in god as our life circumstances are not always what we'd prefer. There are many well-known bible verses that discuss the importance of patience and appreciation for the present moment. I recently saw a poster "patience is the supernatural fruit of the holy spirit". Romans 12:12 says, "be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer". These three commands are key to the emotional and spiritual well-being of every believer.

I cannot thank you enough for your patience and resilience throughout all of this and adapting your lifestyle for, not only for your protection, but for that of your family, friends and neighbors. Covenant Living will be "open" again—it will just take time so we all do it right.

As we close I want to leave you with a prayer.

God, teach us what it means to have faith in silence. When we face trials that are beyond our understanding, help us to find peace. Help me be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer. You set all things in accordance to your time. Remind us to wait patiently and find peace in your plan. In his name. Amen.