



A CARING COMMUNITY IN CHRIST, MAKING DISCIPLES FOR CHRIST, EQUIPPED FOR MINISTRY BY CHRIST

June 4, 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

I am writing to share the good news that we will resume in-person worship services on Sunday, June 14, at 10:00 AM (our usual summertime worship hour). Because of the ongoing pandemic, however, these services will, for the time being, operate under some unusual restrictions and conditions. The session and I have determined that we will operate under the conditions described in this letter for at least the remainder of June. At that point, the session will determine if we have enough new information and experience to make further alterations, with the ultimate goal of returning to full and unrestricted public worship as soon as it is wise and prudent to do so. I also want to make clear that live streaming of our services is here to stay, and will always be available as an option for those unable or unwilling to attend in person. If there are those who do not have internet access but who would benefit from receiving the service on a DVD to watch at home, that can also be arranged—please contact me if you are interested.

Notice that I do not say anything about our gatherings being “safe.” This is because until there is a completely reliable vaccine or cure for COVID-19, there will always be some risk involved with attending worship. The measures we are taking aim to minimize that risk, for the sake of our more vulnerable members and friends, but they cannot and will not eliminate them. Everyone who chooses to attend worship is necessarily choosing to take on a certain risk.

In order to keep those risks as low as reasonably possible, we will be implementing the following temporary policies and procedures:

- Anyone who is suffering from any respiratory symptoms or fever, and anyone whose immune system is compromised, is strongly urged not to attend public worship, but to continue to avail themselves of our live streaming options or a DVD recording.
- Those aged 10 and up who attend will be required to wear masks at all times while in the building. Masks will be available for those who do not have their own.
- We will make every possible effort to maintain a minimum of 6 feet of distance between people (except for those who live in the same household). Because of the size and layout of our sanctuary, this will mean limiting the number of household units who can attend on a given Sunday, and requiring that households RSVP in advance to be assigned to a designated seating area in the sanctuary and a

designated entrance point to the building. Only those households who RSVP should plan to attend. In order to accomplish this regrettable but necessary limitation, we will follow this process during each week:

- On **Tuesday**, members and friends who do not have access to internet streaming and wish to attend may phone the church office between 8:30 AM and 12:30 PM to RSVP. Mary Beth or Matt will assign seating in the Sanctuary and in the Fellowship Hall, where a live simulcast of the service will be shown on a large-screen TV, in the order that requests are received during this time period.
- On **Wednesday and Thursday**, members and friends who do have the ability to use the streaming service but wish to attend in person may phone the church office between 8:30 AM and 12:30 PM to RSVP. Remaining seating will be assigned in the order that requests are received during this period. If the number of households requesting seating exceeds the available number of seat locations, we will maintain a “wait list” in case of cancellations. Households on the “wait list” who are not accommodated by a cancellation will be given priority for seating the following week.
- On **Sunday**, those who have been assigned a seating location and point of entry should arrive in the parking lot no later than 9:45 AM. Ushers will be assigned to each of the four entrances to the Sanctuary building, and will conduct each household to their designated seating location, so as to prevent crowding at the entrances or in the aisles. Bulletins will be placed in the seating areas prior to the service, and should be carried out and disposed of along with any tissues or other garbage after the service.
- There will also be some changes in the content and flow of the worship service itself:
 - There will be no handshakes or hugs during greeting time, and worshipers should maintain distancing. I recommend that greetings and the Peace of Christ be passed with a wave or bow from your seating location.
 - Offering plates will be placed near each entrance for giving on the way in or out. There will be no passing of trays or collection of offering during the service. You are encouraged to continue using either the mail or our online giving portals to support the mission of the Church.
 - There will be a significant reduction in the amount of singing in the service, because singing has been shown to be dangerous means of viral transmission well beyond 6 feet even with masks. When hymns are offered, you will be requested to either sing softly or hum, with mask in place.

I fully recognize and agree that what is described here is no one’s ideal for what public worship should be, and I hope and pray that the need for these precautions will not endure long. However, I am joyful that at least this much of a return to worshipping together is now possible, and I hope you will join me in praying that the time when we can responsibly throw off all restrictions will come soon. Please let me know if you have questions.

Yours under the Mercy,

