The following Covenant was mutually developed and communicated by a group of Local Utah Pastors representing various faith groups. While Murray Baptist Church did not participate in its development, it is a covenant that we support and will use to consider our own status for reopening – Pastor Merrills

**Covenant for Reopening (Shared May 15, 2020)**

The following is a letter drafted by several clergy in the Valley.  With the approval of the Church Council, we are covenanting with these churches to open our churches in the manner specified in the following letter.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Curtis

The COVID-19 experience has affected all aspects of society, and religious communities are no exception. Adjustments needed to be made in providing services throughout all houses of worship. Many have opted to conduct services remotely. Now, however, with increasing government pressures to "reopen" businesses in the interest of the economy, all faiths face a difficult predicament. While some church communities are prepared to reopen with varying interpretations of CDC or Utah state guidelines, others reflect on a deeper ethical quandary. While the emotional appeal to reunite with friends and to reconvene worshipping in community are compelling, lifting restrictions at this point in time may pose a serious health risk. The number of COVID infections across Utah is still increasing, making a return to "normal" an act of wishful thinking. Thus, the following clergy have signed a covenant with specific criteria to help houses of worship reopen under more optimal conditions.

* As ethical decision makers we feel the starting point is to gather all the best information we can.  Therefore, we will look to the best scientific information and seek a clear, honest evaluation of the condition and status of the virus and recommendations for fighting its spread.
* We will make decisions based on what is best for the health of our members and the health of all people in Salt Lake City
* We will bear witness to the reality that community is not just what we do when we gather but is accomplished in many ways and we will continue to be creative in fostering community gathered around faith.
* We will seek to be a unifying force in our communities, our city and society as a whole.
* It is our conviction that in spite of being many different traditions we are one humanity and we will continue to promote what is in the interest of all people, not just a few people.

We will continue to pray, seek wisdom and talk with each other as we evaluate the timing of resuming our services.  We will also pray for the day when this pandemic is over and we can examine the lessons learned through the experience.

Signed:

Rev. Curtis Price, First Baptist Church of Salt lake City
Rev. David Nichols, Mount Tabor Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Rev. Russell Butler, Christ United Methodist
Rabbi Samuel L. Spector, Congregation Kol Ami
Rev. Scott Dalgarno, Wasatch Presbyterian Church
Rev. Steve Klemz, Zion Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Rev. Steve Leiser, Shepherd of the Mountain Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Rev. Tom Goldsmith, First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City