



8727 Delaware St.
Highland, IN 46322
219-838-6850
November 24, 2020

Dear All,

As was mentioned this past Sunday, the Session of First Presbyterian church of Highland, IN, has determined that we need to close the church building for in-person gatherings, including worship, in order to promote and maintain health with the recent spike of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Lake County. The onset of cold weather has also contributed to our decision, as we will no longer be able to keep windows open for airflow in our sanctuary. Because this pandemic has created such an extraordinarily difficult health and economic crisis, we will continue working with our mission partners as well as doing our own direct service food ministries. We will also keep the office open during our normal operating hours. All other gatherings in the building, however, will be suspended until conditions improve and we determine that it is safe to gather again based on data and recommendations from federal, state, and local health authorities.

When we suspended in-person gatherings in the Spring we focused on the significance of spiritual togetherness and connection while being physically apart. From that point until now we have thrived in our spiritual togetherness and connection! While some of us have worshiped in-person with masked faces and physically distanced seating outdoors and indoors, many of us have worshiped from home using our virtual options or our paper mailings. We will continue to have our worship services available online and by mail. If you do not have access to virtual options and are not currently receiving a weekly mailing from us, please call the church office at 219-838-6850 to be added to the mailing list. For virtual options, we will send out a YouTube link each week along with supplementary worship materials. We will also be trying out Facebook's Premiere Video feature, which should allow us to participate in the recorded worship service as though it is being livestreamed at 10:30 AM. Further, starting in December we are going to start having virtual coffee fellowship via Zoom around 11:45 AM on Sundays. We will keep you updated on how to participate in these various options each week, so watch out for further communication!

The Session made this decision unanimously, and we unanimously had heavy hearts doing so. Just as we ourselves are heartbroken with this decision, we know that many of you will be as well. It is especially painful that the first time we went through this was during Lent and Easter and that this second time is during Advent and Christmas. If you would like to process the impacts of not gathering in person during this season, please do reach out to Pastor Tyler, your deacon, or any of our ruling elders. We are all in this together!

Above all else, the season of Advent is a season of hope. Our Lord Jesus came to the earth to love us and save us, and our Lord Jesus will be coming back some day to love us and save us! So, with hearts full of hope, let us meditate on the words of *Isaiah*: "Comfort, O comfort my people," says your God...A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

In Christ,

Rev. Tyler Orem
Pastor

Elder Lois Fozkos
Clerk of Session