



May 13, 2020

Dear Merrill Pres. Church Family,

We are currently living in a time that is unprecedented, as least for most, if not all, of us. We are in this together as we wade through all the information and guidelines that have been put before us. We do not believe in a spirit of fear, for we know the God who made the universe, but we do know there are actions that need to be taken. These decision and actions that have been made by the Session are done out of care and concern for our church and our community as we participate in trying to halt the spread of the Corona virus and protect those most vulnerable to the virus, along with abiding by County, State and National guidelines while also striving to do what is best for our church and our community.

With all this in mind, here is an update on our plans to reopen the church!

Worship – We believe that worship is central to our being, and essential during these times, so we will continue having worship at 9:30am on Sunday, online only through the end of May. As long as everything goes as planned by the State and County, and we are able to enter Phase 2 by June 5, we are **planning to worship in-person, in the sanctuary on June 7!** We will be practicing social distancing measures and things may look a little different as we get used to this new reality, at least for now. Along with social distancing, you are also strongly encouraged to wear a face mask, and you will be able to pick one up at the door if you would like one.

Sunday School – is tentatively scheduled to resume on June 21. We continue to pray about how best to meet the needs of our kids and families during this time.

Coffee hour after worship – will be suspended for now. You are encouraged to bring your own coffee and socialize on the front lawn before and after worship, while practicing social distancing.

Wednesday Night Bible Study – since it averages less than 25 people, **will resume in-person on Wednesday, May 20 at 6:30pm!** Unfortunately, we will not be able to have a potluck, so plan to have dinner first, and then join us at 6:30pm. We will be practicing social distancing, and again, face masks are strongly encouraged.

Vacation Bible School – it is with great sadness that Session has reluctantly decided to not have Vacation Bible School this year out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of our children, our volunteers, our congregation, and our community. We sincerely look forward to VBS in 2021!

More than ever, we need to seek God's help and protection. He is our refuge, the source of our hope, health, life and salvation. However, we urge you to take the following precautions:

1. If you, or anyone in your household, is feeling sick or exhibiting flu-like symptoms, please stay home. Symptoms of the COVID-19 virus include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
2. If you are at risk or vulnerable to the Corona virus because of your age or health issues, please feel free to stay home and not risk possible exposure.
3. We want everyone to feel safe when they attend, so there will be hand sanitizer and face mask are strongly encouraged and will be available.
4. If you are attending worship or other church events, please avoid physical contact, such as shaking hands. Also, please take the precaution of washing your hands and/or using hand sanitizer and wearing face masks is strongly encouraged.

Please know that I pray for you daily. I pray that we would have a spirit of faith and not fear, that we would be able to trust in God when everything feels like it is in chaos, and that we would use this time to spread the light and love of Christ to those around it who need to see it now more than ever. Again, *do not be afraid*. We have a spirit of “power, love, and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7) that can be an example to the world in a time like this. I am so excited that we are finally able to start reopening the church, and I look forward to praising and worshiping God together in the sanctuary once again!

If you have any question or concerns, please feel free to contact Pastor Liz or any member of the Session at any time.

God bless,

