



October 13, 2020

Dear Friends,

The maple trees are beginning their autumn display as cooler temperatures mark our days. Those of us who walk, run or garden are celebrating. Good riddance to the heat and humidity!

The cooler weather also marks the end of our outdoor worship services that we have held on the front lawn for the past nine weeks. Despite the sounds of loud mufflers, pulsating car radios and an occasional blaring siren coming from Pennsylvania Avenue, those who attended were enthusiastic about being outside and worshiping together – even behind masks and six or more feet apart. We filled the reservation limit each week and we were fortunate that the weather canceled only one service.

This weekend will be different. On Sunday, October 18, we will hold our first worship service in our sanctuary in seven months. You may remember that we chose this date because we did not want to worship indoors when it was necessary to use air conditioning. Blowing cool air has the unfortunate side effect of blowing the respiratory droplets of our worship leaders around the sanctuary. Fortunately, we have radiators to heat the sanctuary and we do not need to blow air while people are in the building.

We have spent many hours poring over safe and unsafe practices and instituting Governor John Carney's declarations, which have the force and effect of law. Our goal has been to make attending worship as safe as going to the grocery store. We believe we will accomplish it with everyone's cooperation.

Since the Governor's guidelines for houses of worship are not suggestions, but rather mandatory requirements, we have incorporated all of them into our plan. In some cases, such as occupancy capacity, we are holding ourselves to a tighter standard than the state requirement.

If you attend worship, I know I can count on your cooperation to ensure that we are not violating the law. As you would expect, everyone must wear a mask (worship leaders will remove their mask when speaking and choristers will remove their masks when singing), and everyone is required to keep a distance of six feet between themselves and others not in their family. This appears to be a bit challenging for some people. Most of us are accustomed to standing three feet away from someone and **six** feet feels awkward. If you are not feeling awkward when conversing with someone, you are probably standing too close.

Please remember: Wearing a mask and maintaining a distance of six feet from others is not only for *your* protection. It is a beautiful way to demonstrate your care and concern for others and to fulfill the command of Jesus to love your neighbor. Although you may not feel this way, many people feel extremely uncomfortable when someone encroaches on that invisible six-foot barrier.

If you struggle with calculating distances, not to worry. We have you covered! When you enter the church from the parking lot, the pavilion, or bell tower, you will find large yellow dots on the floor leading to the narthex (the back of the sanctuary) where everyone will enter our worship space. The dots are spaced about eight feet apart.

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An usher will direct you to your seat. They will seat you from the front to the back so that people are not constantly walking near others. I'm sorry if you have a favorite spot in the sanctuary. For now, you will not get to choose where to sit. Try to think of this as an adventure in which you will (literally) view worship from a new perspective.

If you decide to attend, please remember that attendance is limited, an online reservation is required, and a number of guidelines must be observed. Please [click here](#) to read the guidelines.

If you are not comfortable attending in-person worship, we will continue to provide our service online with two differences. First, our new camera system is now in place and the quality of the picture is greatly improved. Second, our new system allows us to livestream our worship service (beginning October 25). This means that if you log onto the service at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, you will see the service LIVE as it is occurring. If you wish to watch the service later, the link on the homepage of our [website](#) will take you to the YouTube recording.

For our first in-person worship service in the sanctuary this Sunday, October 18, the service will be **recorded**. It will *not* be livestreamed because our videographers are learning our new camera system and testing the live streaming. Therefore, after the service is recorded on the 18th, it will be uploaded to [YouTube](#) (and [Facebook](#)). We expect the worship service to become available by 1:00 p.m.

A very generous donor covered the cost of the new cameras and software which replaced 20-year-old cameras. We have a fantastic and dedicated video team who have given hours to the old system and are learning the new system.

If you wish to join us for in-person worship on Sunday, October 18, please [click here](#) to make a reservation. Otherwise, I trust you will join us virtually.

In love and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg".

Gregory Knox Jones
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff