

Re-Opening Task Force Update

Friends,

The Reopening Task Force met again on Monday night, October 5th after the October 2nd release from Governor Cooper which included a document prepared by the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) specifically directed to places of worship. This document is attached for your reference. With Coronavirus case numbers on the rise again, the national death toll exceeding 200,000 persons, and the beginning of flu season, our deliberations were solemn and relied heavily upon this document and its guidance. As stated in our very first communication, we have planned to return to worship during Phase 3 of our state's plan when it is safe for our members, staff and visitors. We view our primary responsibility as preparing for our safe return. We all agreed that one Coronavirus infection originating from within our congregation is one too many.

After careful review of the updated DHHS guidance, the Task Force unanimously agreed to resume **outside worship (with live-streaming for virtual participation) in the parking lot of the church at 11:00 a.m. on the following Sunday mornings: October 18th, October 25th, November 1st**. The following protocols will be in place:

- All worshippers will accept personal responsibility for symptom monitoring. If you have a fever, cough or shortness of breath, please do not come to the church.
- Face masks are mandatory, even during outside worship.
- You may remain in your car or you may bring lawn chairs and sit at your car during the worship service.
- Abide by the parking attendants' directions to socially distance by using every other parking space.
- If you are among the higher risk population due to age and/or underlying medical conditions, you bear the greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19. We will continue to provide virtual worship opportunities for those who do not feel comfortable with in-person worship.
- The Task Force agreed that one infection of COVID-19 among attendees will result in the church's return to virtual worship.

Small groups have requested meetings at the church. The DHHS guidance on this topic is as follows: *"Gatherings such as religious classes, youth events, support groups, or other programming should be held virtually to ensure social distancing."* After exhaustive dialogue it was unanimously determined that the Task Force is not comfortable extending access to any of these groups at the present time. We humbly suggest that outside porch or park gatherings, or restaurant meeting rooms will meet your needs for space while providing more access to necessities than can be made available by the church.

However, Council on Ministries Chair Parker Watson presented a well-thought out plan for three drive-thru events this year; (1) Fall Festival on Saturday, October 31st, (2) Breakfast with Mary & Joseph on Saturday, December 5th, and (3) Live Nativity on Saturday(s) December 12th & 19th. Participants will remain in their vehicles and receive prepared candy/food/gift bags from masked and gloved church members.

The next update from the Governor's Office is scheduled for October 23rd. The Task Force will meet again on October 26th to review the new information and make a new assessment. We covet your prayers and your acceptance of your responsibility to prevent the spread of this virus in the simplest, most loving way possible. That is, to wear a mask protecting others should you be a carrier without symptoms or knowledge; maintain social distance at six feet apart; and wash your hands frequently using soap and water for 20 seconds. We know this situation isn't easy. We know that we're all tired of living apart for the past six months. We've never had to do this before in any of our lifetimes.

Please know that we continue to work toward our preferred future by making the best decisions for all one step at a time. If you would like more information, we encourage you to speak to one of the members of this Task Force.

Lisa Anthony, Chair of Administrative Board
Parker Watson, Lay Leader
Cathy Olsen, chair of Staff-Parish Relations
Merlin Young, Chair of Trustees
Claude Jenkins, Chair of Finance
Vann Spivey, Pastor
Lisa Jones, Financial Administrator
Iris Senzig, Chair of Safety Committee
Stacey Thomas, Director of Children's Ministries
Sarah Cope, Immediate Past Chair of Administrative Board
Doug Harwood, Past Chair of Administrative Board, Worship Coordinator
Sarah Carey, Nurse
Evelyn Tay, Nurse
Ardys Sandell, Retired Methodist Minister