

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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Grace and peace be yours in abundance:

The Re-Opening Committee has recommended that FCC resume indoors, in-person worship for the beginning of September. This date is a *goal*, dependent upon the status of the virus and guidelines from the state; it may change if conditions worsen or restrictions return. We are deliberately not rushing back into the sanctuary, intent on watching the effects of re-opening in our community and allowing further time to prepare. The Re-Opening Committee is using this time to determine what our future services will look like and how we will carry out our new safety protocols.

These safety protocols will include but not be limited to:

- Required face coverings
- Shortened service(s)
- Limited attendance size
- Appropriately-spaced seating
- Restricted entering and exiting
- No fellowship hour

These measures, once determined, will not be optional, but required for attending services. Much like guidelines for school systems, we are undertaking a “phased” approach. Phase 1 of our “re-opening” will include these and other restrictions, determined by the potency of the virus. As the virus decreases and the risks lessen, we’ll enter Phase 2 with lowered restrictions. However, we should all prepare for the reality of this virus to be present into the coming year and adjust accordingly.

All of us have already undergone a difficult season, and unfortunately, we have more adverse terrain to navigate, but *God is with us*. *We are the Church*, and God’s Spirit will enable us to continue doing what must be done to protect one another and seek to live into God’s Kingdom. Our return to the sanctuary may not be as joyous as we hope for – it will look *and* feel very different – but this season has taught us that our identity is *more than* what happens for an hour every Sunday.

We humbly ask for your continued patience, even as we expect many already feel stretched to their limits. We also ask for your flexibility as we shape these future services to protect one another, especially our most vulnerable. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact myself or a member of the Re-Opening Committee. Specifics are still being worked on but will be shared well before our re-opening goal.

We also ask for your prayers – above all, this season has called the whole Church into a posture of humility, patience and grace. Prayer is not only the work of our hearts, it is through our entire, *lived* discipleship that we extend ourselves to the Divine embrace. Join us in participating in the holy love of God that fills this world, and seeking the wisdom of God’s Spirit to lead us in our Gospel work.

We will continue to offer virtual services every Sunday, as well as additional outdoor opportunities for worship, service and fellowship. Check our Facebook page and website, or contact the church office for further updates. No one should feel isolated or alone – all you have to do is reach out and we'll do our best to take care of one another. We will get through this together.

For now, remember: *Nothing can separate us from the love of God, nor from our bonds as God's people.* “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Blessings to you and yours,

Rev. Jeffrey Hubers & The Re-Opening Committee:

Dennis Thompson	Jean Bloomquist	Mark Zielke	Krista Parin
Andy Lawrence	Russ Zick	JoAnn Sprayberry	Angie Winsman
Scott Sternaman	Paula Thompson	Steve Smith	Cathie Schalk
Barb Freridge	Ryan Cheevers	Diana Seaman	Carol Geldhof
Judy Hoffman	Brenton Offenback	Jan Trapani	Alison Achramowicz
Carly Hubers			