

# First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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Advent greetings to all:

The Re-Opening Committee provided feedback on current COVID levels in the community, offering support for extending FCC's virtual-only worship. Church Council has thus decided to maintain virtual worship until January 15, encouraging all FCC groups to pursue virtual options where possible and limit in-person gatherings. While such decisions are not made lightly, it should be noted church leadership's uniform willingness to proceed with caution, care, and the utmost concern for communal wellbeing.

While this is certainly going to be a different sort of Advent season, the Church is *not closed*. You are the Church: *the people* "house" God's Spirit and act as bearers of the Good News in this important moment. The building may be (mostly) empty, but it can still serve as a resource for your own discipleship:

- Donation bin for winter clothes collection located in church entryway until December 14.
- Contact Pastor Jeffrey to get your group together for a Zoom (online) meeting.
- Stop by the sanctuary during office hours (Mon-Thurs, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.) and pray, enjoy the stillness, remember Whose you are.
- Pick up books or devotional materials from the church library.
- Stay in touch, share updates, care for yourselves and one another.

Virtual worship may not be what we desire, but it can sustain us until it is safe to meet again in-person. Music, Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Spirit can reach us wherever we are – from a computer screen or cell-phone, alone or with our households. Join for Virtual Fellowship Hour after worship using the Zoom links shared in the weekly emails. If you need something, ask. Use email, Facebook, phone calls, letters – you can also receive text updates by texting the number **81010** with the message **@fccstj** to be added to the list.

The Re-Opening Committee will continue monitoring county virus numbers and look for a suitable position to return to limited in-person services. In the meantime, trust in the God who took on *our* flesh, who entered fully into the human situation in order to bring redemption to *every* fiber of existence. The light of God *is* shining; even in this difficult moment, God's Spirit may help us "see" that light in the world and in one another.

We will get through this, by the power of the One who gave His life for us all. *That's* the real story of Christmas, and *no* virus can *ever* change that.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Jeffrey Hubers & FCC Church Council