

June 2, 2020

Greetings faithful Sperry UMC family! I continue to pray for you during our time apart and am awaiting the day we will all be together through in-person worship again. We have begun steps to see that day as a reality by planning our first in-person worship event since the rise of the pandemic.

In this letter, you will find our plan for re-entry, along with guidelines and recommendations for a safe and practical worship experience. This will be a phased-in approach. We will not be at the level of involvement we were in before the pandemic, but we will re-evaluate on a regular basis to include those familiar worship experiences we all long for.

Our target date is June 7th for our first in-person worship service. We will worship together in the Fellowship Hall, so please come to that entrance of the building. We still have social distancing in place, so please leave at least 6 feet of distance from the family ahead of you while entering the building.

It is strongly encouraged to wear a mask at least while entering and exiting the building, especially if the 6-foot distance cannot be kept. Inside, it is encouraged to continue wearing a mask if possible, and we will work hard to provide you with one homemade mask for worship use. Please keep this mask and use it for worship on a weekly basis.

When you enter the building for worship, you will find a station right beside the kitchen that has hand sanitizer and an offering box. Please be encouraged to give your offering during entering or exiting at this station, or you can continue with online giving if you are more comfortable with that method. Above this station, you will find a list of the most critical recommendations while we are together. This includes a reminder to stay at home if you are ill, or if you have come in contact with anyone who is ill, or if you show any symptoms of the Covid-19 infection such as fever or cough.

We understand there are allergies, so if you have a seasonal cough or sneeze, please just be sure it does not accompany a fever. We will give verbal reminders that some of us have these seasonal responses.

In the Fellowship hall, you will find chairs placed 6 feet apart in a wide circle. If you have multiple members of your family present, please feel free to gather enough chairs into a closer group as long as you are 6 feet away from the next family. We will not provide paper bulletins, so please be sure to have something to jot down pertinent information from the announcements on the screen as we prepare to start worship. We will also

have reminders on the wall with guidelines for safe practices, and perhaps can use these spaces to also provide important items you would normally find in the bulletin.

Our initial services will have two worship songs, provided by a worship team of two people. The worship team will be positioned at least 15 feet away from the nearest family, and they will provide our worship music. There are still many unknowns with how far air travels during singing, so it is strongly encouraged to allow these two voices be our singing voices for at least a couple of weeks while we assess more data (This is one of those phased-in approaches I was speaking of). It is our hope that we will be able to return to full congregational singing, but we want to take things at a safe level of involvement. There will be one song at the beginning of worship, and one at the end. We will still include words on the screen with lyrics, but hymnals will not be present.

We will not have a greeting time with hugs or handshakes, but we will take a few moments for smiles and waves as we greet one another in this fashion. Please remain seated during these moments.

While mask use is encouraged, it has been recommended that the sermon is not given behind a mask. I am sure you will appreciate being able to hear the message without it being muffled, and I will be sure to place the pulpit at a safe distance during the message. I will wear a mask during the time I am not preaching. It is also highly recommended to refrain from verbal unison prayer. During the Lord's Prayer, please be encouraged to pray silently, or at a low voice.

As we wrap up our time together, we will all exit after the benediction. This will be done in phases, and we will release families or small groups at a time. Again, please allow 6 feet of space between you and the family in front of you and wear a mask as you exit the building. We cannot gather in groups during this time; we must all exit the building.

Between worship services on a weekly basis we will sanitize chairs, doorknobs, light switches, microphones, restrooms, etc. so we can be prepared for the next worship event. Throughout the week there will be no small group gatherings (Sunday School, UMW, etc.) without expressed permission through the Administrative Council board. There will be no family gatherings, graduation parties, etc. within the building until it is deemed OK through the board. Again, we want to get back to these things, but we must approach carefully as we begin our time together again, and we want to make sure our cleaning procedure is done in a safe manner and our custodian is safe as well.

*** It has been requested to provide Communion during this first service together. Elements of bread and juice will be in individual cups on the serving counter. This will be prepared by individuals who are wearing gloves and masks. If you are comfortable receiving communion, be encouraged to come up and get your elements when the time

is announced. If you are not comfortable, please don't feel expected to partake. We know this is a sensitive matter, and you can take all of this as slow as you feel comfortable with.

If any of the above gives you a sense of anxiety, please be encouraged to continue in online worship. If the notion of people not wearing masks is a concern, if not singing will feel too awkward, if you are in the at-risk category, please know that we will keep the online service at 10 AM available. In addition, I will broadcast the 10 AM Mediapolis service over 87.9 FM. There will be about a 2-block radius from Mediapolis UMC that you will be able to receive signal. If you can't join us online or in person, you can find a parking place close to the church and tune into service on a weekly basis in this manner.

Again, my prayers continue for each of you. In whatever way you continue with worship service, we so appreciate your prayers for this church and the people here we call family. We are making it through this with God's strength, and it is in that strength we trust God is holding us together.

In Christ,

Pastor Bruce