

WESLEY PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dear friends,

July 8, 2020

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! I am thankful for this opportunity to reach out to you. This letter contains important information about upcoming opportunities to worship together. This is the second of five letters you will be receiving in the coming weeks to help you understand as fully as possible the path ahead.

If current trends continue, we plan to open for in-person worship on August 2, 2020, at 10 am. We are monitoring the Kent County Covid-19 data (www.accesskent.com/Health/covid-19-data) and will make adjustments if needed.

The Joshua Task Force of Wesley Park has been regularly meeting to prepare policies and procedures to help us gather again in the safest possible way.

- ❖ Eric Terry is the chairperson of the Joshua Task Force. Eric sets the agenda and keeps the minutes. He makes sure everyone has input and that there is consensus in the group.
- ❖ Deb Hodges is responsible for communications and is the person to contact if groups or ministries want to meet. We want everyone to follow the same guidelines and share when they meet and who is present. Deb is the point person for those communications.
- ❖ Ken Oesch and Sara Kropp are working together on the Disinfecting Team. This is one of the most critical areas as we move toward meeting in person. They will be training teams to properly disinfect the church before, during, and after worship. As you can imagine, we will only be able to meet in person if we follow proper disinfecting policies.
- ❖ Jane Ellen Johnson and Lynda Edsall are the two who will greet everyone at the Welcome Center entrance. They will help each person understand what is needed before entering the church and will gracefully and firmly enforce the rules equally.

- ❖ Bob Williams will be training a team of ushers. We are eliminating as much as we can passing things from hand to hand. There will be no bulletins or offering plates. The ushers will be responsible for setting up chairs in the worship space when people enter and helping people maintain proper social distancing. Families from the same household can sit together, but all others will need to be spaced six feet apart. The ushers will help to maintain a safe worship space and a safe flow of traffic into and out of the church.
- ❖ Bill Schick is the one who coordinates all of these ministry teams. Bill looks at the big picture and helps to oversee all aspects of our in-person gathering. He will help us focus each week on improvements and ways to be more efficient and grace-filled.
- ❖ Annette Jeltema will be the person who checks everyone into the church. She and her team will have iPads and will keep track of who is present. Check-ins will help as we learn how to reserve a space in worship, what we do if there is a need for overflow, and these records will be essential for contact tracing. If someone does get sick, we need to be able to let everyone present know quickly.
- ❖ My role is to work with Pastor Banza and Restoration Community Church so that all of us are on the same page and follow all the same guidelines and expectations.
- * Everyone on the Joshua Task Force will be trained in our Wesley Park UMC policies. We want to be consistent and as safe as possible when we gather together. Please, if someone asks you to comply with one of these expectations, do so. Know that we are trying to do a difficult thing on behalf of the whole church. We love you - now, please remain six feet apart. :)

In two weeks, you will receive a letter that will spell out what you can expect from when you enter the parking lot to the time you leave. Today, I want to focus on some of the basics: wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, and how to greet one another.

Jane Ellen and Lynda will have some masks available as they meet with each person under the Welcome Center awning. However, you are encouraged to bring your own mask. It should be a mask that fits your face, covering your nose and mouth completely. Practice how to wear your mask so that it feels as comfortable as possible.

You might be wondering why we are requiring everyone to wear a mask. Until we get to a time when there is a vaccine or treatment for Covid-19, we all ought to proceed as if we or others have it. A mask does not completely protect us, but it makes a significant difference. A mask limits what the one wearing the mask exhales into our shared space. The virus seems to be transmitted by these microscopic droplets that can enter deep into the lungs through the eyes, nose, or mouth. Limiting how many droplets we share, and covering two of the three main areas that the virus is taken in, can help.

These droplets, under normal circumstances, travel about 6 feet. That changes when shouting or singing, but we will talk about that in a future letter. When we maintain proper social distancing of six feet apart, that limits how much we are exposed to droplets that may contain the virus.

Entrance into and out of the Family Life Center through the Welcome Center will be roped off so that we have clear directions. Along these paths will be markers that will help us maintain six-feet apart. You might have seen these types of markers at the grocery store or post office. If you are in doubt, members of the Joshua Task Force will have some items available to help us calculate safe social distance.

One of the things I love about Wesley Park is how much you love one another! It will be difficult not to hug one another or walk up and shake someone's hand. We are blessed that we know some sign language. We could wave to one another or hold out the sign that says, "I love you." (Thumb, pointer, and pinky fingers extended with the other two fingers tucked into the palm.) We could tap our hearts with our open hand, which is a sign of love and affection. We could learn to bow as a sign of respect and humility. Early on in this pandemic, my mom wrote a poem about a time to bow. I will include it at the end of this letter.

Next week you will receive a letter that describes the precautions we will need to undertake. These precautions include how we will disinfect surfaces, how to wash our hands, the necessity to limit the people in your vehicle to those who live with you, and why we will need to refrain from lingering in the church. In this letter, we will explain the reasons for refraining from singing and the possibilities of new ways to praise God.

I am proud of the ways you have cared for one another during this pandemic. May God bless you and keep you.

Peace,



Rev. Dean N. Prentiss

We've Got New Rules to Follow
by Phyllis Prentiss

We've got new rules to follow
and they are quite hard to swallow.

We wash our hands
and stay at home
It's fine unless
you live alone.

We can't help wondering
how it will end
with our social distant rules,
is there a new way to greet a friend?

We can't hug anymore—
maybe a bow!
It's so easy and natural
We'll have to learn how.

We bow with respect
when dignitaries meet.
We would have to get used to
a new way to greet.

We bow in square dances
in respect of each other;
Let's give it a try
when we all get together!

Hugging and handshakes
will take a backseat
to a mysterious virus
we don't want to meet.