

OUR MISSION IS TO BUILD A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITH ALL PEOPLE

WESLEY PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dear friends,

July 15, 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 **third of five** letters you will be receiving in the coming weeks to help you understand as fully as possible the path ahead.

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 best way to deal with a virus is make sure you don't get it in the first place. The Center for Disease Control has published guidelines to disinfect places of worship. Sara Kropp and Ken Oesch are the Joshua Task Force members leading our Disinfecting Team. They would welcome your help. Please contact them if you can be part of this essential team. (616-988-6738)

The work of disinfecting begins with cleaning. Nolan and Jennifer Warner are at work cleaning the church top to bottom. Gloves, masks, and gowns are now as important as vacuums, mops, and brooms. Every surface must not only be cleaned, but disinfected. We will continue to keep the church closed with limited traffic and touches to doorknobs, tabletops, and other surfaces.

We have stocked up on the approved, fragrance-free products to handle the disinfecting of all surfaces in the church. One of the difficulties of meeting in the sanctuary for worship is the task of disinfecting. The pews are both wood and cloth. The floor is carpeted. There are lots of surfaces to touch.

Worship will be in the Family Life Center. Prior to each gathering, the Disinfecting Team will mop the floors, wipe down all the metal or formed plastic chairs, and disinfect the bathrooms. During the service, if someone uses the bathroom it will need to be wiped down with disinfectant by an attendant. After worship, all surfaces will be

disinfected again. Restoration Community Church will be following all of the same procedures.

We will have three touchless hand sanitizing stations in the Welcome Center and Family Life Center for all to use. We encourage you to wash your hands often. This simple act goes a long way in eliminating the virus before it enters your nose, mouth, or eyes. Carrying hand sanitizer with you is also a helpful way to remember to wash your hands regularly.

When you look at the makeup of our congregation, we are high-risk. Young adults have health concerns or have vulnerable parents. Children may unknowingly infect their grandparents. I cannot think of anyone who is not one or two people removed from someone who is in the high-risk category for contracting this virus. We need to be extra-cautious about how we interact to protect one another.

Families who live together, unless under quarantine, can be in close proximity with each other. But if you are not in the same household, you have to act as if you or the other person is carrying the virus. That is why only people who are living in the same house can drive together to the church. If we were not in the high-risk category we could, under certain circumstances, give someone a ride in our car to church. But we are in the high-risk category and sharing the air in a small space like a car is risky. I understand how important it is to help one another and to be kind and generous. But, please, do not drive anyone who does not share your house in your vehicle.

We are both high-risk, and highly friendly! I know that one of the things we have missed the most during these months apart is visiting with our friends! It used to be that you could get to church early and visit, and stay late and solve the world's problems over a cup of coffee and a few cookies. Now, we need to discourage people from gathering inside the church and visiting. We will enforce the six-foot rule. The ushers will escort you in and set you up in a seat that you will not be able to scooch closer to visit with friends. At the end of the service I will bless you, remind you to drop your offering in the basket before you leave, and the ushers will excuse you chair by chair. Others will encourage all in the congregation to keep moving until we get outside. We do not want to

be rude. We recognize that it is safer for us to be outside in the open air with a breeze. Once we are outside, if we can stay at least six-feet apart, you are welcome to visit for as long as you wish. But we will ask you not to linger and visit inside.

The painful reality is that there will be no singing in worship. I know. Singing is an expression of faith, a time of prayer, and an offering of praise to God. But, singing is different than talking. Talking produces droplets that travel about 6 feet. Singing produces aerosol particles that can travel dozens of feet and remain in the air for thirty or more minutes. The aerosol particles from singing are so small they are not blocked with a mask. There are some chancel choirs who thought it would be safe to sing with some getting sick and a few dying.

Music will be part of worship. Our music team will continue to offer their talents each week. Beautiful music will be projected onto the screens. Even though it is not safe for us to sing, we can allow the music to move us. We can clap our hands or snap our fingers. We can hum quietly. We can bring in an egg shaker and shake it to the music of worship. We can close our eyes and let the music lift us higher to God. If we are in our cars listening to the worship service on our FM radio station with the windows up, we can belt it out and sing to our hearts' content! Or, wait until we return home and watch the service online again and sing along. All this, until that time comes when it is safe for us to make a joyful noise to the Lord as a congregation in worship.

The letter that you will receive next week will describe what a day of worship will look and feel like. You will get a better sense of the movement from the parking lot, through the check-in process, into the Family Life Center, and what you can expect for each worship service.

May God bless you.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Dean N. Prentiss". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dean N. Prentiss