

August 25, 2020



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Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ,

It has been a joy to be able to have a handful of outdoor gatherings with many of you. For those who have attended, thank you for honoring physical distance and mask wearing in love for others. It is a way we can show our unity and care for one another in Christ. It also continues to be a joy for me to provide worship videos and copies of sermons for those who continue to remain at home these days. We have made a lot of adaptations over the last few months; and I praise God for your willingness to be adaptable in the Spirit as well. That ability to adapt will continue to be of importance for us as the year goes on.

As promised, David Cheesebrow, Joe Stemig and I met again and have decided on plans for September. Our current plan is to move back into our building for worship services on Sunday, September 20th at 9:00 am. We will enjoy hearing music and solos together, listening to Scripture together, and sharing in the Lord's Supper together. The rationale for this decision and the protocols that we have agreed upon are also included in this packet. If everything goes well, we would continue to meet indoors each Sunday that follows, unless circumstances urge otherwise. We hope by starting in September it may provide us with some clarity on how we might be able to gather in colder months. We will not hold any outdoor services on September 6th or 13th. The building will still not be available for other gatherings or meetings outside of worship until further notice. David, Joe and I will continue to meet to evaluate each month.

The situation continues to be very fluid and our need to be adaptable remains. If for some reason we deem it important to cancel September 20th or any other Sunday that follows, we have the option and experience to return to outdoor gatherings. As always, if you choose to remain home during these events, there is no shame in that. For the sake of consistency and for those who choose to remain home, videos will continue to be posted each week, even as we start indoor gatherings. Sermons will continue to be printed and mailed to those who request. Also, I will be contacting those on our homebound list about bringing communion to them again. If you are interested in this possibility, please feel free to contact me.

I thank God for you all in your willingness to be flexible with all of these changes. You continue to exhibit faith in Christ, not only in our various modes of engaging worship together, but in your support of this congregation and in love for others. Let us continue to walk in the Spirit, resting in the grace of God in Christ and walking in his way of love.

There are two other important developments I want to inform you all of. Our congregation has been in the process of looking for a new church secretary. The council extended a job offer to

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Lori Lexvold. We just heard back today that she has accepted the offer. She is excited to bring her experience and passion as a secretary to our congregation. Her first day will be on Wednesday, September 9th. We are excited to welcome her.

Also, our Little Pantry that sits on the Armstrong side of our property continues to be used frequently. Thank you to the many of you who have contributed in various ways. It is a wonderful way to share with our neighbors that we care about them in Christ. One of our members was recently approved by Thrivent for a \$250 grant to help supply the pantry. Rather than simply spending the money, we are posing a challenge to you all to see if we can raise \$250 worth of supplies for the pantry before the end of September to match the grant before we spend it.

If you would like to participate, there are a few options for contributing. Feel free to call me and schedule a time to drop off donations. Receipts are not needed. You can simply write the dollar amount (estimated amount is fine) on a piece of paper and leave it inside your bag of donations. If you do not want to write the amount down, you can contact Norma Cheesebrow with your amount at 612-619-0692 or njcheesebrow@gmail.com. You are also welcome to bring donations to the church on September 20th and 27th when we host our indoor services. Also, if you want to contribute, but do not want to submit the cost for any reason, that is completely fine. At the end of the month we will spend the grant money as well and give a report to the congregation on the total donations received.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me. It is an honor to work with you all and walk with you all in Christ. He is our foundation in the midst of life's changes. Blessings to you all.

In Christ,

Pastor Chris Weber

P.S. Please note the other documents in his packet. There is a letter from the President of the congregation, Mark Lehner, regarding some positions on the council. Please read it. There is also a copy of our protocols (required by the State) that Joe Stemig, our Plan Administrator, has put together for us regarding returning to indoor gatherings. Dave, Joe and I wanted to share it with you in order to help shape your expectations of gathering indoors if you choose to do so. Finally, the rationale for moving indoors is included if you are interested.

Rationale for an Indoor Service

As many of you may recall, I sent out a letter at the end of June detailing why airflow was a major concern for our congregation. That concern was based upon studies that were coming up that suggested COVID-19 may spread by aerosols and not simply droplets from coughing and sneezing. In other words, simply breathing the air of someone with COVID-19 over a period of time could lead to infection. Given this new emerging information and possibility, we did not think it wise to step back inside. A few weeks after that letter was sent out, the World Health Organization officially updated a Scientific Brief on modes of infection in order to honor the possibility of aerosol spread and call for more research into this mode of infection for coronavirus. More research is still needed. Our concerns about airflow remain.

However, as we continue to learn more, there are a number of reasons why we are still willing to begin meeting again indoors. When dealing with airflow concerns, airflow needs to be improved, and/or the time in the space needs to be shortened. One of the biggest ways we plan to address the airflow concern at this point is by limiting our time together along with the continued wearing of masks and maintaining distance. Like our outdoor services, our indoor services will also be 30 minutes or less. Windows and doors will be open as weather permits. We will continue to look into more ways to best address this issue during the pandemic.

Over the last few months, there have been a number of outbreaks that stemmed from church gatherings, like worship or funerals. Often, these outbreaks are coupled with a breakdown of physical distance, or a lack of masks, or prolonged amount of time in the room with someone exposed. We hope that by maintaining all three of these things - masks, distance and time together - that we can create a safe and joyful experience for those who attend.

The other big reason we are willing to host an indoor gathering at this point is the positivity rate of transfer in our county. The rate of community transfer seems to be relatively low at this point. A number of factors may change that rate such as decisions around schools and universities, as well as how people choose to spend their labor day weekend. As I write this, UofM has already delayed the opening of dormitories another two weeks. We hope that starting September 20th will give us a window of opportunity to see if any of these events and circumstances would affect the rate of spread in our community.