

June 11, 2021

My Dear Union Family,

I am happy to announce that we will soon be returning to indoor worship. We will begin with two services of Word and Prayer on Wednesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> and Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. We will have our first Sunday morning indoor service on July 4<sup>th</sup> at 9 AM. We will continue to provide our virtual services as well as continuing to broadcast the Sunday services in the parking lot.

This past year has been a long journey as we continually made our way through the ups and downs, disappointments and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with our church council, under the advisement of our Re-Opening Team, we met those challenges, making the best decisions at the time given the information we had. Many of those decisions have been difficult ones, as we would have preferred to be able to worship in our sanctuary. However, the ultimate goal has always been to worship together in person SAFELY.

It is considered unsafe for groups to gather indoors when the vaccination rate is under 50% and safest to gather once 70%+ of the population is fully vaccinated. Right now, 54.5% of eligible 12 and older Lehigh Valley residents are fully vaccinated and that number is growing every day. It is hoped that we will reach the 70% mark sometime in July.

One of the keys to gathering safely indoors is proper ventilation. The Property Committee has investigated our air handling system in the Sanctuary and determined that it exceeds the recommended three full air exchanges per hour.

As we begin to gather in person we will observe certain precautions:

- 1) The church will open 15 minutes prior to worship.
- 2) We ask that those NOT FULLY VACCINATED wear masks in the building at all times.
- 3) We will be sitting in every other pew, as marked, to maintain distancing.
- 4) We will continue using the prefilled communion cups.
- 5) Initially, there will be no congregational singing. Special music will be provided.
- 6) We ask you not to gather for conversation in the building, but to make your way outdoors to visit and converse with one another.

When the Lehigh Valley reaches the goal of 70% fully vaccinated we plan to lift these precautions. We will continue to monitor all of the safety guidelines regarding communal singing and look forward to bringing that back when it is

considered safe to do so. There is no guarantee of complete safety from transmission of the COVID-19 virus, but we will continue to do our best to keep our members as safe as possible.

For those who are feeling ill or are uncomfortable coming inside to worship, the service will continue to be available on our YouTube channel as well as being broadcast in the parking lot each Sunday.

It has been quite a year! Thank you for your patience through all the changes, your willingness to adapt, and your faithfulness in worship, mission, and giving. As we prepare to come back to worship in the sanctuary, I ask that you continue to be flexible and show Christ's love and care for your sisters and brothers in Christ as we continue forward in faith.