

Scott Trinity and Union UMCs

# The First Word



July 14, 2020

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## CHURCH IS REOPENING

Yes, that is correct. After much prayer, discernment, discussion and more prayer I have decided with God's help that we will begin in-person worship once again. To be upfront, it will NOT be what we have been used to but we will come together again August 2: 9 am at Union Church and 10:30 am at Scott Trinity.

In following both the recommendations of the West Ohio Conference, local Health Departments, insurance carriers, and CDC guidelines we will strictly observe the following:

- Masks will be worn at all times while in the church.
- Social distancing will be required and pews will be cordoned off to ensure safe distances are kept
- We will have no fellowship time, hugs or handshaking (this one is the most painful for me to be sure!)
- Congregational singing and responsive liturgy will not happen, nor will we have a worship leader for the time being. I envision asking several folks to offer instrumental and special music times to enhance our worship in lieu of singing.
- We will not print or distribute bulletins and there will be no hymnals or Bibles in the pews. You are welcome to bring your own and take them home with you after worship.
- We will not celebrate Holy Communion in worship together until such a time as we can determine how to do so safely and as respectfully as the Sacrament demands.
- There will be no Sunday School or social hour and restrooms will be closed except for emergencies.
- It may be necessary to make reservations on a first-come, first-served basis. In lieu of that, we will have assigned seating in areas as near as possible to when you usually sit. We will have more clear direction on this as we near our opening date.
- If you are sick in any way or showing signs or symptoms (cough, fever, sore throat, difficulty breathing, etc.) you are **STRONGLY** encouraged to stay home on Sunday.

I know this is not what many of you wanted or expected of our return to in-person gatherings, but as Pastor, I have had the difficult and undesirable task of making these difficult decisions. I want to personally thank the following individuals who helped me with honesty and grace as I discerned what is best for both



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

**The people of The United Methodist Church®**

our churches: Marshall Burns, Bob Johns, Linda Hummel, Lori Hummel, Amy Hatcher, Tim Davies, Linda Swaisgood, Kerry Conrad, Shirley Below and Stefanie Hunker.

To be clear, this was not a consensus even among the above folks nor are they to blame for opening "too soon," "not soon enough" or "with too many restrictions." That decision is and was mine alone based upon their input and honesty as well as consulting the Conference and District offices, many pastoral peers, local health departments and the CDC.

I have heard that we should not live in fear and trust God; to that I say loudly, AMEN! However, I also believe just as strongly that as a church we are charged by God with protecting the weakest and least among us so we must take all Earthly precautions to stomp out this vile virus once and

for all.

For those of you wanting to wait longer, I want to make very clear we will be continue to worship via Zoom even as we worship in person for those who choose to remain at home. The log-in link and phone numbers will remain the same for well into the future and perhaps for much longer even after the virus is but a horrible memory.

I encourage each and every one of us to pray for our churches and its members daily as all of us have been, are, or will be affected by this virus in one way or another. I also humbly ask that you keep your Pastor in your prayers and this has been a most difficult and trying time for me. I trust that the past two years make clear that I love each and every one you so very much and that is, in part, why I was and still am reluctant to return to in-person worship.

I also want each of you to know--most for the first time--that I take medications that leave me partially immuno-compromised. So it is with as much care for each of you as it is for my own health and that of my family that I have waited as long as I have to reopen our churches. I do not say that to garner sympathy or sway your hearts but simply to state a factor in my decisions up to this point.

My biggest fear from the very first day I stopped worship was that this virus would divide us as churches. I am most pleased to say that this has not been the case AT ALL and that is an answer to my biggest prayer for our churches since mid-March.

Once again, each of you make me so very proud, humbled and honored to be your pastor for the past two years. Here's looking to many more years together! And all God's people said, AMEN!

## Zoom worship continues each Sunday morning, Wednesday evening

Here is all the information. **NOTE** these links and numbers will remain the same each week!

### Worship Live!

Time: 10 am Sunday

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/611622324>

Meeting ID: 611 622 324

+13126266799,,611622324# US (Chicago)

### Hymn Sing and Prayer Meetin'

Time: 6:30 pm Wednesday

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/142152604>

Meeting ID: 142 152 604

+13126266799,,142152604# US (Chicago)



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