



May 19, 2021

Siblings in Christ,

When the Congregation Council made the decision to suspend in-person worship last spring, it was hard to imagine the journey that would travel together. This journey has been difficult. We have all longed to be gathered in community in worship, service, education, grieving, and prayer. Our decision to refrain from such gathering has been centered in love, making sure that we do not exclude or alienate those who are at increased risk during the pandemic.

With the high vaccination rates in Iowa, the decreased risk level in Polk and Dallas Counties, and the updated guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Congregational Council has voted to update our mitigation policies.

I am pleased to share the following updates with you.

Outdoor worship service (10:15 a.m.): Masks are no longer required for the outdoor worship service. There are two exceptions. Due to the comfort level of the Pastor who is supply preaching, masks will be required on June 27th and July 11th.

Six feet of distance is still required between groups of people.

Please also continue to bring your own food and drink to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We are closer to being able to safely provide this meal but will continue on this path for the time being.

In Person Worship (9:00 a.m.): Weekly in-person worship will commence Sunday, June 6th.)There will be 3 exceptions to this over the summer. There will be no in person worship on June 27, July 4, and July 11 because Pastor Mike will be on vacation and Continuing Education.)

Things to know:

- The livestream option will continue. We do not anticipate a situation where the livestream ministry would cease.
- We will start with seating for 14 groups.
- Seating will be by reservation so that social distancing between groups can be maintained. We will start with 14 groups. To reserve space in the sanctuary for worship contact either the church office 515-276-6873, or email Emma, our Minister for Worship and Music at emma@gacedm.org.
- Masks are required to be worn at all times in the building and during the service, *except* when receiving communion.
- Singing will be allowed! You may also consider humming the tune with the vocalists.
- **Holy Communion**

-will be provided at this service through prepackaged bread and grape juice. (Unfortunately this is NOT a gluten-free option. We are going to work on solutions other than the prepackaged option and hopefully transition to something else later this summer.)

Other use of the building: We are opening the building to smaller groups, beginning on June 7th.

Things to know:

- Masks are required in all public spaces.
- We are starting with groups of 15 and fewer.
- In order to meet, you simply need to reserve the space.
- The main spaces available are Grace Hall and the Gathering Hall. Other spaces may be considered upon request.
- If everyone is vaccinated and the entire group is comfortable, masks may be removed while gathered, but would need be worn when leaving the space.

There are a lot of considerations to make as we look at re-entry into the building. There will be more information to distribute in the next couple weeks, but it was important to place these changes before you right away.

Thank you, again, for your care and patience throughout our journey together. These last months have been very difficult, but there is a break in the clouds and clearer skies approaching.

In Christ,

Pastor Mike, on behalf of the Staff, the Congregational Council, and the Health and Safety Task Force

Pastor Michael Schmidt

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