

Greetings friends,

As many of you know, we are planning some significant changes to worship here at CCUMC beginning in November. Given the extent of these changes, I felt it would be prudent to write specifically on this topic.

Over the past four months we have been blessed with the ability to worship together outside on the Town Point lawn. While the ability to worship together outside has been a blessing in a variety of ways, as winter quickly approaches, changes must be made. The trustees in conjunction with the Regathering team, feel it is appropriate to move worship inside beginning the first Sunday in November. So, starting November 1st, our Sunday services will be held inside Trinity Church's fellowship hall.

We have carefully examined the guidelines and restrictions sent out by both the state of Maryland and the United Methodist Church in preparation for this move inside. So while COVID-19 is still very much present in both our nation and state, we are taking all the appropriate precautions as we plan to move worship inside. Some of the most basic precautions that must be observed at all times are: the wearing of face masks in church, maintaining six feet of distance between family groups, and signing in as one enters the church building. Observing these and other precautionary measures will impact how we have worship on a week-to-week basis, but it is necessary for us to ensure the continuing health and safety of our congregation at this time.

In order to best accommodate a socially-distanced worship service we have selected the fellowship hall of Trinity Church as our primary location for Sunday morning services. For proper spacing to be maintained between family groups, Trinity's fellowship hall is the room with the highest overall seating capacity. While we would love to use the sanctuary of Trinity or Town Point church, those spaces do not provide flexibility in seating options, and simply do not have the seating capacity in comparison to the fellowship hall given current guidelines. Even with our switch to the fellowship hall for worship, we have felt it prudent to add a third Sunday morning worship service so folks can properly space out.

Our Sunday morning services will be at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00. The 8 am worship service will be an informal, traditional style worship service, similar to the usual traditional service at Trinity. We hope to provide this service as a space for those who are high-risk to attend church, given that it is the earliest, it will be the cleanest that the church will be the whole day, and will most likely have less folks attending than our two following services. The 9 am traditional worship service will be moved to 9:30, but will remain relatively similar in its content. This change in time is being made to allow adequate time for folks to exit the fellowship hall, for surfaces to be cleaned by the Regathering team, and for the next services attendees to enter. The 11 am Jacob's Well contemporary worship service will remain at the same time. We will continue to post Sunday School lessons for youth and children online, but will begin offering an in-person class between our 9:30 and 11:00 services. Adult Sunday school will also be held both in person and via ZOOM at its usual time.

While we are worshiping together inside, it is more important than ever to remember that certain guidelines must be followed. We will have greeters at the door to take attendance for contact tracing, take everyone's temperature with a no-touch thermometer, and to welcome everyone to

service that morning. A distance of 6 ft will be required between 'family groups' while seated in the fellowship hall for service. A 'family group' includes persons living with one another, but also those who are close enough to you that you consider them in a similar way. We will have our ushers assist in seating family groups in a properly distanced yet efficient manner, but we will allow congregants to dictate who they consider to be in their family group. Related to this, we will not be requiring RSVPs on a week-to-week basis, but do ask that you fill out our worship attendance survey so we can plan accordingly for each service.

One additional precautionary measure the trustees are putting in place is asking all in-person attendees to sign a waiver for their family. This waiver simply says that you will not hold the church liable for any COVID related illness potentially incurred by attending church. While we know all of our church family are people of good will, this is recommended by the UMC, and the trustees feel it necessary at this time. If you would like to read and sign the waiver ahead of time, the waiver has been emailed to everyone on our weekly email list.

At each service, we will have a variety of talented musicians leading us in worship, including Afton and the Jacob's Well praise team. Unfortunately, singing by the congregation will not be allowed at this time. Additionally, we are asking everyone to continue the 'bring your own' style of worship from our outdoor services by bringing their own chairs and communion elements. This is simply to cut down on the amount of materials that we physically pass out each week, and the amount of items that we have to sanitize between each service. However, chairs and communion elements will be available for those that need them.

It is important to note that as we move inside we will also be moving online. Once we are back inside Trinity Church we will begin live-streaming and recording the 9:30 and 11:00 services every Sunday. We hope to stay connected and offer meaningful worship opportunities to all those who are uncomfortable or unable to attend worship indoors through both live-streaming on Facebook and YouTube. A recorded version of the service should be posted on both platforms in case you happen to miss the live streams on Sunday morning.

The trustees and Regathering team will monitor our first few services closely and make changes as needed to ensure the continuing health, safety, and vitality of our church community. We hope to take the month of November to fine-tune our set-up for indoor worship, so we welcome your participation and feedback in this process.

Going forward, we simply ask that everyone be in prayer daily for our church and its continued ministry. I give my personal thanks to all of you for the love and flexibility you've shown over the past few months, and ask that we continue to maintain that spirit into this new season in the life of our church. So while many things in our world and in our worship are changing, I am excited at the in-person and digital opportunities God is giving us, I pray we take hold of them enthusiastically and safely.

*Grace and Peace,
Pastor Sam Mitchell*

November Worship Survey:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=8421xaOK06QkBP7rtNjA-sFd1lfQpCnxe7-a-P3hdUQ0JaNFBUSFJFQjE5NDZIWE1KS0haQU5RTy4u>