



Wittenberg Lutheran Church

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Rev. Emily Edenfield, Pastor

August 21, 2020

Dear Siblings in Christ,

At our Council meeting on August 9, Church Council was glad to see that the numbers of Covid-19 infections and deaths in our state have been trending downward. While we are not done with this pandemic yet, we have been planning for what comes next in our congregation's life.

Wittenberg is coming back to in-person life one step at a time. It was in March that we closed our building and the church moved largely online. On May 31, we started worshipping in person as well as online, and our preschool opened up in June. The letter that we sent to you at that time is still available at wittenbergleesville.org, and this one will be posted there as well.

In the phase we are starting now, we will be changing some parts of our worship together and we will be having small group gatherings. Both meeting and worship will continue to have guidelines to help us slow the spread of Covid-19 as much as possible.

Holy Communion is the most important of the changes to our worship life. We will change some of the way that we receive the body and blood of Christ, but it will be good to share God's meal together. We will announce the details and when that will begin in upcoming emails, social media posts, and other ways, so that we can gather well. We will also have a layperson reading the Scripture lessons and we will be talking about ways to expand our musical expression as well. Research indicates that there is still no safe way for us to sing together or play wind instruments, so we will keep on praising God in other ways.

Current protocols that will continue in our worship life include keeping a distance of 6 feet between households, requiring masks, taking attendance, leaving out the passing of the peace, and receiving the offering through a wooden plate at the entrance to the Sanctuary. We will also continue streaming worship online as we have been.

Council also voted to allow groups to meet again, with guidelines. These guidelines include:

- Rooms and meeting times must be reserved with the church office.
- It is safest to meet outside, but inside meetings may take place in rooms large enough to accommodate a 6-foot distance between participants. It might be helpful for leaders to ask participants to RSVP before events so that they can plan for a large enough space.
- Attendance lists must be provided to the church office in hardcopy or email immediately after the event, so that if someone who attended later tests positive for Covid-19, we can let others know that they have been exposed.
- All participants must wear a mask over their nose and mouth, maintain a 6-foot distance from one another, and accept personal responsibility for the risk of their being present.
- When a group has members who want to participate but are not present, the group should make an effort to include them by having them on speaker phone, using Zoom, or another method.
- Any food offered should be prepackaged and separated to avoid cross contamination.
- Wittenberg will provide cleaning supplies for the wiping down of bathrooms and all touched surfaces in the meeting room and church building. These supplies should be returned to the church office after use.

These guidelines were approved for Wittenberg groups that meet either at the church or off site. We are eager to see one another again, and we want to protect our most vulnerable by doing so as safely as possible.

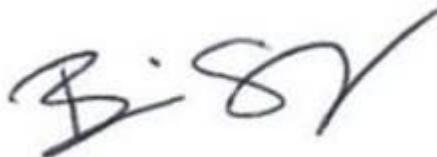
At this time, it does not seem prudent to offer in-person Sunday School classes. The numbers of people and rooms used make Sunday School more complex than having one meeting at a time. Our task force continues to develop plans for Sunday School and we hope that with dropping numbers, we will be able to learn in person soon as well.

The Covid Renormalizing Task Force and Council will be continuing to monitor the statistics on Covid-19. We hope that numbers will continue to drop, and that we can continue to loosen restrictions and move closer to life as we used to know it. However, we are also aware that numbers may spike up this fall for any of various reasons. If so, we may need to go back a step. None of these decisions has been easy or quick because everyone involved cares deeply about the people of Wittenberg and our mission to be Gathered in Baptism, Fed by Worship, and Sent out as Servants.

Thank you to all those who have been part of the process and all those who have weighed in with your thoughts and creativity.

Please continue to pray for Wittenberg and all our members and friends. Please pray for our community and all those who are fighting this virus. I am looking forward to seeing you again soon, as you are able and comfortable, and I know that God will continue to carry us through these days.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Shealy". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Pastor Emily Edenfield

Brian Shealy, Council President