

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are finally returning to in-person worship on Sunday, June 13th. None of us imagined in March of 2020 that we would be apart for so long. Throughout the pandemic, our staff agonized over the question of when to return to worship at 597 East Avenue; weighing the risks of proximity; trying to get a handle on sanitation protocols, all the while receiving conflicting messages from CDC “experts” answering to politicians whose messages were neither consistent nor trustworthy. Though we can look back at this last year and marvel at how technology kept us connected and how our choir members, led by Thatcher Lyman, deeply enriched our online worship experiences, we also know that no worship service conducted over the internet is complete. We are incarnational after all.

Perhaps for some of you, we are coming back too late. I’ve heard that our decision to wait until now to return to in-person worship, has perhaps caused a few in our midst to seek other churches; churches that decided to come back earlier, or who never closed their Sunday morning doors at all. If that is you, please come back. You are a treasured member of our church family and you belong here! That being said, we did what we thought was faithful and loving in keeping you and those around you safe and we would do nothing differently.

In the midst of these unprecedented and fearful times, I am deeply thankful for those who continued to support the ministries of our congregation. Your patience and consistent support of our staff and our ministries, have not only kept us alive, but have enabled us to maintain a vibrant presence in our city. Your ongoing gifts over the past year, have shown me the power of God’s indomitable Spirit. Your generosity has positioned us to renew our commitment to reaching out to the least, the lost and the last in our city and beyond. Your pledged gifts in this coming year will allow us to imagine new ways of being the church not only on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week. We are still here living out the Gospel of Jesus, because God has worked through YOU!

So, here is what you’ll see when you join us on Sunday, June 13th. After signing in at the elevator entrance of the building, (*masked and hopefully “vaxed”*) you will find a printed bulletin to pick up inside the sanctuary entrance where you will also see an offering plate in which you may place your Sunday offering. You’ll notice that for everyone’s safety, socially distanced seating has been established and that continued mask wearing is required. Though the worship service will be abbreviated, the celebration of Holy Communion will take place each and every week!

At the conclusion of Sunday’s worship, we ask that you take your bulletin with you and proceed outside to the west lawn, where post-worship fellowship will take place. Please note that for the time being, we will be unable to provide coffee or snacks.

Though we can take great joy in coming back together again, let us not forget that this pandemic which kept us apart, has also killed more than 3.7 million souls globally. Those are 3.7 million universes that have been permanently shattered. In the midst of our gratitude for coming back, let us not lose sight of the healing and consolation for which our world desperately yearns. Together in Christ, let us be that healing!

Peace and Love,

Pastor Doug