Dear Friends,

Many weeks ago, a re-entry taskforce was formed here at Incarnate Word for the purpose of discerning how and when to re-open our building for public use. As you know, there have been no in-person gatherings at Incarnate Word since mid-March. At that time, none of us could have imagined that four months later we would still be living under the pandemic restrictions of social distancing.

Understandably, many are wondering when we will be able to come together again in worship and other social settings. The short answer is, only when it is safe to do so. Like you, our team is anxious to return to some kind of "normal." But we also realize that in the interest of keeping one another safe, we will need to expand our definitions of "normal" and "in-person." Despite being socially distanced, the work of the congregation has carried on. Sunday worship and mid-week prayer services have taken place weekly; Bible and book studies have been offered; the Congregation Council, Core Groups, and other taskforces have met from the safety of our homes using Zoom technology; non-perishable food outreach has continued, and our homebound members have been cared for by regular phone visits from pastor and caregiver alike. We are thankful that the ministry of our congregation has kept up through these difficult times. So, where is the taskforce now in its work?

From the beginning our team, in conjunction with the Core Groups, has focused on the following questions:

1. **Congregational Worship** –
   a. How do we continue to keep the congregation connected to God and one another when we are unable to come together in person?
   b. In what ways can we enhance our online Sunday and weekday worship services?
   c. Is it possible to add an online giving component to our online Sunday worship service?
   d. In the event that in-person worship is possible, what would our worship service look like without congregational singing and other liturgical responses?
   e. How feasible is it to wear protective masks for a prolonged period of time in worship?
   f. What are best worship practices for keeping everyone safe?
   g. If we truly welcome "all" in worship, what are the implications of restricting the numbers of those who can attend on a Sunday morning?
   h. Do we have an adequate number of volunteers available on a Sunday morning to help us abide by local, state, and federal health and safety guidelines?
      i. Greeters and ushers to ensure contactless entry and exit of building for guests
      ii. Volunteers to supervise the filling out of required contact tracing attendance sheets.
      iii. Volunteers to take temperatures and ask required health department questions of all who enter the building.
      iv. Volunteers enforce the requirement of wearing face masks?

2. **Building Sanitation** –
   a. Do we have the necessary cleaning supplies to adequately sanitize the building prior to and following communal gatherings?
   b. How does the ongoing lack of available cleaning supplies effect our readiness to welcome the public back into our building?

        c.   What effect do the increased sanitation needs have on current staffing?

        d.   Do we have volunteers to monitor the sanitation of restrooms during worship?

3. **Communications** –
   a. How do we communicate the work of the taskforce to the congregation?
      i. Congregational emails; Zoom Town Meetings; Sunday Zoom Fellowship
   b. How do we facilitate communication between congregants and leadership?
   c. How do we enhance our online capabilities for those who do not feel safe returning to the building?

As difficult as these days are now, we will get through this together. In the meantime, our Re-Entry Taskforce will continue to address these and other questions as we seek to ensure the ongoing vitality and safety of our ministries for the months and years to come. Please feel free to be in touch with any of our taskforce members with questions or concerns.

Yours in Christ,

Lynn Krauss-Prince, Margret Roberts, Elva Mikk, Rich Byers, Linda Northrup, Brian Roulin, Thatcher Lyman, and Pastor Doug