



Members and friends of Indian Run,

Thank you for investing the time to read these important updates regarding the mission and ministries of Indian Run. I recognize this document is long, but it is information that we want you to know.

This season of physical distancing and separation has been difficult for all of us. Some have become sick or lost family members due to the virus. Some have lost their jobs or had their employment reduced, causing significant financial disruption for themselves and their families. The need to work from home and learn from home has caused increased stress for families and an increased sense of isolation for those who live alone.

Of course, the biggest change for our family of faith has been the need to close the church building and worship online from our homes. We miss being with each other. I miss being with you. Zoom calls and online worship are helpful, but it's just not the same, is it? And yet, that's our reality.

The good news is that we are learning how the church is more than just the building. Throughout this season we have continued to fulfill our mission to grow love in new and creative ways.

We are staying connected with one another.

- Most, but not all, small groups are continuing to meet via videoconference
- Youth group participation has remained at the same level as before this COVID-19 season
- Our children's ministry continues to reach out and connect with children and families through children's moments in worship, activities at the connection table, and social media
- The preschool did a wonderful job offering ways for their kids to feel love and connection with their teachers through regular YouTube videos
- Our care ministry team continues to reach out to homebound parishioners and our seniors
- Our music ministries continue to provide meaningful worship music in creative ways
- Our connection tables outside the church have provided ways for us to stay connected and demonstrate our faith through sidewalk chalk and our Grow Love tree

We're continuing to live our faith through missions:

- We've started a weekly email that includes suggestions on how to put our faith into action
- Our quilt team has made lots of masks to give away to our Dublin Methodist Hospital, New Life Community Outreach, and for our own congregation
- We continue to support the work of our mission partners like the Dublin Food Pantry, New Life Community Outreach, Welcome Warehouse, and Habitat for Humanity
- Welcome Warehouse has recently resumed more of its operations, using our church facility
- For many weeks now the Red Cross has used our Fellowship Hall every Thursday for blood donations that are so necessary

The mission of the church continues, and I am so proud of the ways we have continued to stay on our mission to Grow Love.

I wanted to take this opportunity to share a couple of other important updates with you.

First, I want to share the good news about our finances.

Our most recent financial report shows that we are right on budget for the year with 98% of our projected income and 98% of our projected expenses. Thank you for your continued financial support! We are truly blessed to be in this financial position.

There will clearly be some changes in our income and expenses for the year based on things we are not doing and extra things that we have needed to start doing. Of course, the church leadership, staff, and finance teams will be paying close attention to the budget and making adjustments as necessary throughout the remainder of the year. If you feel the need to adjust your estimate of giving for the year, please let Lisa King know so that we can adjust our plans accordingly.

Again, thank you for your continued faithful investment in what God is doing through the ministries of Indian Run!

Next, on behalf of the Staff-Parish Relations Team, I want to share that the entire staff will be taking the first week of June off, from June 1-7.

At a recent staff meeting, we realized together how much we all needed some time off. Cindy shared a "word of the day" with me that she got on her computer last week. The word was "repose" which means to rest or relax, to achieve a state of mind without worry. That's what our staff needs. That's what I need – to be able to hit the reset button. Many of us had vacations planned that we were not able to take because of the pandemic.

The SPR team has organized volunteers from the congregation to cover the essentials that week, like checking the building regularly, collecting the mail daily, checking the office voicemail and email for emergencies, and so forth. If there is an emergency, you can call the church and leave a voicemail in the pastoral emergency mailbox and we will be notified.

We will still have online worship on Sunday, June 7, but I will not be hosting it live. It will be prepared in advance. All of the District Superintendents in our Conference are recording messages that churches can use so that pastors can take some time off, and we'll use one of those messages on June 7.

I want you to know how proud I am to serve alongside each and every person on our church staff. I know you're proud of them as well. They continue to do amazing work to keep our church on mission. If you get a chance, please find a way to let them know of your appreciation.

Next, on behalf of the Children's Ministry, I want to remind folks that in-person VBS has been cancelled for June. Watch for an announcement coming soon about some alternate plans the team has been working on.

Finally, I want to talk about our plans for how and when we can re-open the building and resume in-person worship.

We take Jesus' commandment to love one another seriously. Part of loving one another means keeping one another safe and doing no harm. As much as we long to be back together in person, right now, the most loving thing we can do is to remain physically distant.

While other businesses are opening up, church is different. When we gather in person for worship, we sit in the same space for long periods of time, which is not currently recommended. We sing together, and by most accounts, singing is one of the easiest ways to transmit the virus as we continually project our voices and spittle and other aspirations that come out of us fill the air.

Last week, our church Leadership Team reviewed a list of over 15 different considerations and decisions that we must face before responsibly moving forward with opening the building and resuming public worship. Their responses were reviewed yesterday afternoon by a Re-opening Task Force comprised of me, Sean Cotter as chair of the Leadership Team, Marilee Chinnici-Zuercher on behalf of the Trustees, Andrea Laux representing welcoming and hospitality ministries, and Cindy Danko-Southey and Jose Manriquez representing the staff.

We are paying close attention to the guidance and best practices that have been made available through the federal, state, and county government, as well as guidance from our Bishop, Conference, denomination, insurance company, and church leadership.

There are a few things that we know for sure:

Re-opening will need to happen in a multi-phased approach. Some things we will be able to do sooner than later. Other things will need to wait, potentially until we have a vaccine or other widespread immunity.

No matter when we re-open, there will be people who will not be able to attend, maybe because they are part of the vulnerable population, maybe because of personal choice, or for any other reason. These people will need to be able to livestream our worship services even when we re-open.

We also know that we do not currently have the technological or human resources infrastructure to effectively livestream from the sanctuary. This will take some time to design, order, install, and test. The good news is that we have a team that is already working on this project with quotes underway, and the Leadership Team has approved the expenditures required to purchase and support the livestreaming portion of our worship.

This will be an expensive undertaking, costing many thousands of dollars to do it right. If you would be interested in making a contribution to help offset this expense, we would certainly welcome it. You can simply mark your contribution with the word "Livestream" so that we can allocate it appropriately.

The re-opening task force has decided that Phase One of our re-opening plan will be to continue worshipping separately via livestream until we can offer a high-quality livestream experience from the sanctuary. When we return to in-person worship, we don't want our livestream to be an afterthought. We want those who can't return in-person to have the same kind of quality worship experience as they might get in the sanctuary.

As I said, it will take some time to get our livestream running in the sanctuary. As with any project, it always takes longer than you want it to. Our hope is to have the livestreaming ready by mid-July and

do at least one or two “soft-opening” Sunday worship services before we enter into Phase Two and begin to return to in-person worship, which we hope to do on the first Sunday of August.

Of course, our return will be dependent upon the then current guidance from the government and our denomination. As we have experienced, new information is released almost daily, so we can expect guidance to be different in late summer, one way or the other.

This desired August start date for Phase Two will give us the time we need to get the technology ready, and it will also give us the opportunity to see how things go as the world opens back up. During this time we’ll continue to develop more detailed plans for how we go about opening up in Phase Two and when we can resume activities like children’s ministry or fellowship time, which likely won’t be until Phase Three or later.

I know that August feels like a long way away, and I know that some will be really disappointed to hear this news while others will feel like even August might be too soon.

We recognize the need to connect with one another face-to-face, and we considered having outdoor worship services, but in the end we ran into the same challenge of making the service feel good for everyone, including those who would be watching online, and livestreaming worship from outside is not something we feel we can do effectively.

The good news is that we came up with a compromise that I’m really excited about! Our worship planning team met on Wednesday and developed a plan for a sermon series for June and July called “Faith at the Movies.” In my sermons I’ll be looking at themes of faith that we can find in film. And the best part is that we’ll be offering a Friday night viewing party for each of the films outside the church in the courtyard where we can come together and see each other while remaining physically distant.

There will be movies for all generations. “Back to the Future,” “Inside Out,” “Breakfast at Tiffany’s,” “The Greatest Showman,” The Lion King,” “Remember the Titans,” and “Yesterday.” Join us on Friday nights for seven weeks starting June 12.

Bring your face mask, lawn chair, blanket, and snacks. It will be a great way to gather in a safer way outside until we can hopefully gather inside for worship.

The staff will also be trying some options that may allow us to stream the Sunday morning service from the courtyard for those who would want to gather outside to worship together. Watch for more information on that.

So that’s where we stand for right now. I will continue to offer updates like this as needed so that you can remain as informed as possible.

One of the treasures of being a part of the Indian Run community of faith is our Irish Blessing. It is so filled with inspiration and hope. In the end, it promises that we will meet again. Until that time, let’s stay committed to our mission to grow love in whatever ways we can. God bless.

Pastor Jeff