

Respecting Each Other's Needs During a Pandemic – Re-Opening Survey Results

To all of you, thank you for your responses to the recent congregational survey regarding the re-opening of our campus for in-person events. We had approximately 150 responses and the Session has been in the process of analyzing and discussing your thoughts, concerns and suggestions. As you would expect during this uncertain time, the results from the survey covered a wide spectrum of options to consider as we point toward re-opening.

Perhaps most importantly, responses were nearly evenly divided for the question on what factors will influence your decision on returning to in-person worship. We carefully reviewed every response, and 50 people said they would not return unless the virus is much more under control than it is now, while 42 people said they would return with mandatory mask-wearing and social distancing. Seventeen respondents felt it was safe to re-open with no safety measures in place, and 30 responses were unclear. So, as you can see, the Session and Re-Opening Task Force have a tough job ahead as we try to meet the needs of our entire congregation.

Also, thank you for your thoughtful suggestions about ways to improve our online worship experience. While many are very satisfied with our current online worship experience, we appreciate the helpful suggestions we received from others that will allow us to enhance the appeal of our online offerings. The Session and staff will continue to study these results and look for ways to implement your recommendations.

Additionally, your alternative ideas regarding re-opening and also expanding our online offerings were most helpful. Many of you suggested outdoor worship as we move into the cooler months in Sarasota. Other ideas regarding ways to expand our online experience through additional classes, Bible studies and fellowship times were valuable. The Session and staff will look for ways to accomplish some of these suggestions.

For now, with infections continuing to rise in our area, we will worship online on Sunday mornings; but supplement recorded services with occasional in-person gatherings for worship and fellowship, with safety precautions in place. Our All Saints service in the sanctuary (on November 1) was well received, and we are looking forward to an outdoor concert with *Goodbye Eddie* on November 21. Watch for additional opportunities to gather safely during the upcoming Advent season, beginning on November 29.

One of our favorite sayings in this congregation is: *We are all in this together*. We continue to welcome your input as we seek the best direction on how to engage each and every child of God in meaningful, purposeful worship. We continue to request your prayers for God's guidance as we seek ways to meet the wide variety of needs among our members. And we continue to ask for your support and encouragement as we work through this challenging time hand-in-hand as members of the one body of Christ.