

Dear Centenary Family,

I can't tell you how wonderful it is to see you all in worship on Sundays. The ties that bind us together as sisters and brothers in Christ do indeed transcend time and space.

The newsletter this week has important information about some upcoming events, transitions, and changes that I hope you will look over carefully.

I also want you to know that our office will be reopening on Tuesday, June 1. **Our new hours will be 8 a.m.-12 noon. Al and Ron will resume their normal hours in the building as well.** We will continue to use all the means of communication we've been using throughout the pandemic. We've learned that there are many ways to stay connected, to offer care, and to do ministry during this time of pandemic.

Last Sunday in worship, I mentioned the work of our Church Council and Healthy Church team in steering the Centenary ship during these challenging days. I'm so grateful for their persistent, committed, and creative leadership.

Our Healthy Church Team's work is now finished. Following some good guidance from our Annual Conference, we will now be forming a Post-Covid Reentry Group (you'll see this referred to as our PRG). This group will continue to monitor what practices we need to follow to do ministry in safe and healthy ways. But their most important task will be to help us reformulate our vision for ministry as we become the Post-Pandemic Church. We'll keep you posted as this group comes together and begins their work of study, prayer, listening, and discernment.

I think this is both a challenge and an opportunity for us. The challenge is that those of us who are eager to get back to "normal" and resume doing the things we've always done may be impatient with such a process. The opportunity is that this new group can lead us to be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance as we ask, as the disciples did gathered in the Upper Room before Pentecost, what God has in store for Centenary on the other side of the pandemic. We really need to ask what attitudes, practices, and habits we need to leave behind. We need to consider what new forms of ministry and mission God is calling us to embrace.

One piece of advice that makes great sense to me and helps lower my anxiety level is that as we begin in-person worship, we need to keep things simple and we need to go slow. Our main goal through this summer and early fall is simply to get used to being in our building again and to readjust to being in public with others. Other things I've been learning that help me get my bearings:

- Don't talk about the "new normal." Instead be open to a new future.
- As a congregation, we need to see ourselves as a core group of disciples ready to launch something new. In other words, try to see ourselves as if we were a new church plant.
- In the last year, people have been through a lot—a pandemic, social unrest, economic uncertainty, loss of loved ones, and more. We need to be patient with each other—and spend time listening to each other. In other words, we as a church have an opportunity to be a healing community.

There's more to share, more to learn, and many more people to thank for all they are doing and have been doing. So please stay tuned to our newsletter and to worship as we move into the future together.

You are loved—by God—and your church family.

Peace,

Matt