



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF HUMMELSTOWN

May 18, 2021

Dear Friends,

I am sure by now you have seen or heard about the changes at the government level for COVID-19 mitigation here in PA and across the country. As has been the case for the last year, some changes happen quickly, and some take time to roll out. The same has been true of our congregation. Firstly, I want to express my gratitude for all of you who have done everything in your power to remain connected to each other, to navigate new worlds of digital life, and support the congregation for more than a year now! You have shown yourselves to be not just a place of worship, but a people who embody the church in the world. And secondly, I want to update you to the new protocols our Gift Team Board has discerned will fit our congregation and will be the best practice for all in our congregation, including our most vulnerable.

INDOORS

At the May Gift Team Board Meeting, it was decided that given current science and guidance, we will **continue** to mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to ensure that those who are unable to be vaccinated due to age or immune complications are still protected. This decision also ensures that we are not creating a discriminatory welcome to our community to feel the need to prove a vaccination status.

However, we will return to **open seating** throughout the sanctuary and will not structure the church for distancing but encourage you to make your own choices about with who and where to sit. We will also return to **allowing singing** for the hymns rather than humming as the CDC guidance allows singing for vaccinated individuals with masks on.

Bulletins will be available near the entry doors for you to pick up before finding your seat. If you prefer to continue to use your phone or tablet for the digital version, you are welcome to do so and leave the paper bulletins for others.

On communion Sundays, the church **will provide** self contained gluten free/ juice combinations to pick up near the bulletins. If you struggle with the packaging of the individual cups, please speak with an usher for a small plate and assistance with the wrapping. If you prefer to bring your own, you are still welcome to do so.

We will continue to **not pass** the offering plate, but will leave it accessible at the entry and exit doors for receiving our giving.

Faith Formation hour before church will resume June 6th, with discussion and conversation time in Keller Hall lead by Bill Shumway. However, the intergenerational, all ages group, will continue to be on hold for the time being. If you have an interest in the intergenerational group and would like to discuss leadership and programming possibilities, talk with Pastor Beth to see how and when we can begin to offer this opportunity once again.

OUTDOORS

In a spirit of acceptance and courtesy to all and the needs of individual families, we ask that everyone **be prepared with a mask** when engaging in outdoor events, but leave it up to the event leader or the individuals to decide when to wear them. Some of us will continue to mask, and when in conversations with those wearing masks, we encourage you to show mutual respect and mask as well.

HYBRID WORSHIP

Our current pattern of worship streamed to **Facebook Live will continue** forward, however, as our music shifts, there may be times where the projector and screen in the sanctuary is not used, and other times that it

will be. The cameras for both the congregation view and the altar view will continue to be used. If you have concerns about having your image shown online, please talk with the office. We are envisioning a continued hybrid existence for our community that will allow for engagement in worship outside of the traditional worship hour, so the livestream, archived worship on YouTube and weekly sermon podcasts will continue to serve as ways to connect our community beyond Sunday. We encourage you to continue to recommend them to others, check in on them yourself, or share with those seeking worship resources.

LASTLY...

In all these changes, I want to say that making the decisions to engage in our shared ministry can feel like a lot of pressure, or very stressful decisions if there are individuals in your family with specific concerns. So remember that each of us, as disciples, has made a covenant to stand with you and support you in making the right choice for yourself and family.

This is an opportunity for all of us to practice patience and respectful dialogue as we navigate a middle ground of vaccinated, unvaccinated, and not eligible realities for our entire congregation. In this middle ground, there is still a lot of fear and hurt within us and it is our job as disciples of a God who chose LOVE above all, to find ways to encourage and share that love with each person we meet. Let us continue to be a *Small Church, with a Big Heart* that accepts the road forward will not be simple but knows it will be walked in mutual respect and love.

If you have questions or thoughts on this process, please reach out to us by leaving a message with the office, emailing your thoughts, or by call or text to Pastor Beth.

Pastor Beth and the Gift Team Board

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