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October 8, 2020

Dear Church family,

Our lives and lifestyles were altered by the COVID-19 virus pandemic, and our church stopped gathering indoors to worship seven months ago. The decision to close our campuses in order to protect the members of our congregation and love our neighbors as ourselves was not difficult. Determining how and when to regather indoors is. COVID-19 does not discriminate as hundreds of thousands of people have contracted the virus and the number of deaths continues to rise. Our church must continue doing our part to protect ourselves, and the people with whom we interact daily.

All of us are working through our thoughts and feelings about what we are passing through. We hear from people every day who have varying views of the virus and how to respond. Some are anxious and afraid. Others believe the response of many is an overreaction. Most people are somewhere in the middle. They are cautious yet also eager to begin meeting together to worship indoors. Through this time, we have been praying about what is the best response of followers of Jesus. How can we best love God and love others?

We have focused on the teaching of scripture that says, "...in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Phil. 2:3-4). The Apostle Paul follows these verses with the ancient hymn describing Jesus' humility, obedience to God, and his total trust in God's provision and way. This is what our church has been about since its earliest days and we remain committed to loving God with our best, and loving ourselves, and our neighbors as best we can.

The Leadership Council made the decision that it was best that we stop gathering indoors as a congregation based on the information we had concerning the seriousness of COVID-19 and the quick and contagious spread of the virus. The Leadership Council will decide when they believe it will be safe for us to begin regathering indoors for worship. They brought together a small group of physicians early last summer to advise them about the virus. They recently appointed an Ad Hoc Committee made up of healthcare professionals, senior adults, parents of young children, and members of the pastoral staff to establish how we can best safely resume worshipping in the sanctuary. The Leadership Council will consider the information and advice generated by the committee before determining when we should begin regathering.

We are an extremely relational, highly missional people that trusts God and each other. Good things have occurred within our church during the last seven months and our best days may be ahead. The way to our future together requires all of us---our prayers, our cooperation, and our patience. May our everyday lives continue to tell the story of the glory and goodness of God.

Bruce Lennon, Chair of Leadership Council

Dr. Janelle Rhyne, Chair of Diaconate

Dr. Jim Everette, Chief of Staff