



Community of Faith United Methodist Church

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Rev. Rob Vaughn, Ph.D., Pastor

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Dear Family & Friends of CoF:

I am so very humbled by your continued witness to the love of God in Christ during these pandemic days, especially when we are unable to worship in-person in the sanctuary. Even though our building has been closed for Sunday worship, Community of Faith continues to be open for ministry. This not-so-brief note seeks to update you on what has been happening at CoF since our last pastoral note.

Food Distribution Ministry

It is difficult not naming all the many church and community folks who have made possible our incredibly significant ministry to the neighborhood. Cathy & Larry Spaine, Terry Metcalf and Brad Fries however have worked almost daily to ensure the smooth operation of our food distribution ministry these months. At various times over the past months, sourcing food has been a challenge. Because of the unprecedented outflowing of financial support, we have been able and to purchase food from the Capital Area Food Bank, Giant (in addition to their donation) and a restaurant supply company. We have also been able to purchase eggs each week thanks to Epiphany Episcopal for their "Egg Fund."

There also have been several neighborhoods who have been collection food donations throughout the past months and bringing them to church. In many ways, this has been a refection of Jesus story of the loaves and fishes – all because of neighbor's caring for each other.

When are we coming back to in-person worship?

In June, the church named a "Healthy Church Team" (HCT) to guide us back into in-person worship, education and provide protocols for our user groups. The team consists of Carol Larsen, Beth Carter, Jeff Mowery, MaryAnn East, Hannah Godfrey, and Kelli Timanus. Consulting the protocols established by the Virginia Conference, the team begin to put together both how we will gather as well as how we will stay safe and healthy.

I wish I could give a definite date. When we met July 20, the schools were re-evaluating their proposals and made public their change of plans July 22. I had thought we would be returning to in-person worship by the time school opened but that hope has been delayed for the same reasons the schools changed their plans. Our HCT will continue to consider our denominational as well as public health recommendations and evaluate dates for our return. While there are some other denominations and individual churches that have begun to gather in-person

Food Ministry during the Pandemic

Date	Families Served	Individuals Served
3/17/2020	74	348
3/24/2020	83	390
3/31/2020	95	447
4/7/2020	105	494
4/14/2020	178	837
4/21/2020	175	823
4/28/2020	201	945
5/5/2020	175	823
5/12/2020	175	823
5/19/2020	167	785
5/26/2020	153	719
6/2/2020	153	719
6/9/2020	148	696
6/16/2020	135	635
6/23/2020	124	583
6/30/2020	132	620
7/7/2020	125	570
7/14/2020	134	630
7/21/2020	135	664

(with restrictions of course), we have determined to take a more conservative stand relying on John Wesley's wisdom, first, "do no harm."

Over the coming weeks, many of you will receive a phone call from the team or their representatives about your comfort and readiness to return to in-person worship. They will be asking if you will need to wait until there's a vaccine available or better treatment options for CoVid available; if you are ready now to return; or if you are comfortable returning with the establishment of particular protocols.

The protocols that are developing are probably obvious to you. Mask wearing in the building will be mandatory. Also completing an online or written health screening form asking about any CoVid symptoms each time you worship in-person will be needed (this will also assist for any contact tracing if that becomes necessary). There will not be hymnals or bibles in the pews to eliminate another surface which might leave any contamination. Responses will be available on the screens or your own digital device. In the immediate future, singing will not be possible but humming, clapping, signing and other physical forms of expressions are possible. The vocalizations from congregational singing is one of the riskiest behaviors. Some of our physical space will be modified – the water fountain is not available, and bathrooms will be limited to only two persons at a time. Communion will be celebrated with an individual cup & wafer rather than our usual common cup and bread. These are just some of the differences we will experience when we are able to return to in-person worship.

Will online worship continue?

Online worship has been a blessing in many ways. Folks have been able to worship anytime rather than just at 830 or 1030. There have been some folks at CoF that were able to begin worshipping again that had not been able to be at worship because of their family schedules that are now able to join in worship. Some folks have found inviting their friends to worship online to be easier to do than an invitation pre-pandemic.

Regardless of when we return to in-person worship, we will now always have some element of online worship. In the immediate future, it will be for persons waiting for a vaccine or better treatment options to emerge. But this has become a part of our ministry that will, in some form – streaming a live service as it happens or recording a live service and then offering it online later, will now always occur. To prepare for this, we have contracted to add a camera to the sanctuary and upgrade our audio system to give up more options for an online presence.

Vespers on August 2 at 7PM

Sunday evening, August 2 will be an opportunity to gather for an outside evening vesper service consisting of scripture, a reflection by Hannah Godfrey, communion, and music by Dr. MaryAnn East. To participate, you will need to register at [Sign-Up Genius](#) by 5PM on July 31.¹ The Health Form necessary for participation can be downloaded from our website's [worship page here](#). Physically being at church will require a bit of preparation for a while – you will need to bring and wear a mask and will need to preregister – this is to insure we meet the guidelines for the number of folks present as well as provide for record keeping in the event contract tracing is needed from a gathering. We are not used to doing this, but it is how we will be able to safely meet and care for one another like we have always sought to care.

Prayers during Online Worship

To help folks connect during this time, we hold a time for prayer together over Zoom at 10AM and 11AM on Sunday morning. The number of folks participating in this time of sharing prayers for ourselves, our community,

¹ If you are reading the printed edition of this letter, the link for sign-up Genius is <https://bit.ly/39scn1k> and the link for the health form is <https://cofumc.org/start-here/worship/>

our nation, and world have ranged from 4 to 15 persons at a time. The links for this Zoom prayer time are in the emails and Sunday bulletin.

Faith Education at CoF

During the pandemic, Adult Church School has had record attendance. Mike Folsom has well transitioned the class time to an online presence and each Sunday morning from 9AM to about 9:55AM, about 20-25 folks participate. It is a little different as many of you have learned from work and school, but it is still a way to connect and learn. Zoom links for Church school are published in Friday & Sunday's email and in the weekly bulletin. Some of our folks have continued their bible studies and mutual support groups over Zoom as well.

Just this past week, nine persons completed a six-week study of "*American's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America.*" The group meet weekly facilitated by Hannah Godfrey and was rich with conversation and insight.

Faith education for children recognized that parents are the primary educator of their children and Kelli Timanus continues to offer resources for children and their families via email and postal mailings. To be in touch with her, just email bjkelli@yahoo.com.

Financial Update

Your generosity has enabled signification ministry to continue at CoF during these times. At the end of June (*one-half of our fiscal year*), 58.1% of pledged income had been received! Thank you. Your contributions and those of the community to our food pantry this year have reached \$16,000 allowing for the buying of food for our record numbers of food clients. Gifts to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund totaled \$7,400 so far in this year which has allowed for help with gas, utilities and rent for folks in need.

Many of you have begun giving online during the pandemic and now 68% of all your giving occurs this way. Thank you. Gifts can be made via the post office, text, online or even dropped off at the office during food hours.

Thanks to you all our bills are paid, and we are in a stable financial position. However, this is accomplished by selectively withholding \$11,000 of our denominational giving to date. An additional challenge is the loss of income from two anticipated sources, about \$11,000 to date from a language school for children and a preschool that was to begin this fall. If neither can open this fall, our additional revenue loss will be \$23,000. Fortunately, the church participated in the federal PPP program this spring where we received \$44,770 to maintain our payroll.

Instead of a separate mailing, the printed copy of this letter will be accompanied by the second quarter statement for our tithers and pledgers. Of course, you can always view your contribution at www.onrealm.org.

Thank you

Although our building is closed, ministry continues. Providing food for those experiencing scarcity, providing a way for persons to serve neighbors, offering connection with one another and learning over Zoom, offering worship each Sunday in a way you can access anytime and offer to your friends and neighbors, offering spiritual care during these unusually stressful times – ministry at CoF continues to you. Your presence and volunteerism, your prayers and gifts and service are a vital witness to God's love and presence. Thank you. You have been present to one another in many ways over these days and I look forward when we can physically be present in the future. In the meantime, remember who and whose you are – God's precious daughters and sons, bearing witness to God's great love in Christ.

Peace, *Pastor Rob*