

Email to the church, 11/19/20

Good afternoon church family...

As you well know, Macon county is experiencing a significant rise in COVID-19 cases and virus-related hospitalizations and deaths. Given that the Illinois Department of Public Health, in light of this data, has encouraged houses of worship to move to virtual worship only, we have decided to comply. Therefore, beginning Sunday, November 29 and continuing until further notice, Central Christian will suspend in-person worship and move back to on-line worship only.

This decision was not easily made. But since this pandemic began, we made the choice to take the safest option available to us. With the impact the pandemic is currently having on our hospitals' census and the staff called upon to serve the needs of patients – to say nothing of the adverse impact the virus is having on the population in general - we believe this is the safest option and wisest decision to make.

What makes this decision so difficult is that we have felt confident in the safety precautions we established and those who have come back to in-person activities have abided by them. Moreover, we know that those who have come back to in-person worship have done so repeatedly and thus have shown just how important in-person worship is to them, even during these difficult times. Still, after many consultations and conversations, we believe this is the right choice to make. In addition to being an autonomous faith community, we are also a member of the wider Decatur community. And making the decision to move back to virtual worship only, is one way of doing our part as a responsible member of this community.

What does this mean for the future?

- Worship on 11/22 will continue as planned (with all our regular safety precautions and guidelines).
- Worship on 11/29 (and thereafter) will be virtual only.
- During the week, members' security cards will still work, though activity in the building will be limited
- More information will be forthcoming related to our programming for Advent 2020

Your church leadership understands that some of you think this is an obvious decision to make, while others will have a harder time understanding the need for this decision. But I want to convey three (3) things to you now on its behalf:

First: Our primary focus throughout this pandemic has been to keep our congregation together throughout these uncertain and changing times. We do not anticipate that changing.

Second: I hope that we have proven – throughout these last 8 months - that we have found a way to allow for safe in-person gatherings as soon as possible, withstanding the recommendations of local health officials. Our commitment to that will not change.

Third: We thank you for your understanding and flexibility. Each of you is important to our ministerial and church leadership staff as well. This pandemic is truly fatiguing for all of us and we wish things were different. But on March 29, when the pandemic first impacted us, I said to you during worship: "Don't give up on us. For we will not give up on you." We are committed to standing by one another and will not give up on seeking to find ways to keep us connected, regardless of the changes and challenges. As long as we remember that it is not *how* we are connected but *that* we are connected that matters, we will come through this.

Yours in Christ...

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