

God's greetings to you all!

In the middle of a pandemic, God is good...all the time...and all the time...God is good!

As Christians, we must remind ourselves that we did not even have buildings to meet in until the latter part of the 4th century AD. The necessity of meeting in a building for worship or study has only been a part of our Christian culture for the last few hundred years. So, it is with the understanding that we are the church and that Christ's kingdom has never been, is not now and never will be limited to and bound to the walls of our structures that we persevere as the children of God.

While churches have 'reopened' in various ways and degrees over the last few weeks, most (if not all) have been cautious about exposing congregants unnecessarily to the COVID 19 virus. I and Good Shepherd leadership have been keeping as our primary driver for decision making John Wesley's second Simple Rule – 'Do No Harm.'

As UMC churches have 'reopened' around the state, there have been several outbreaks of coronavirus among our sister congregations even as the numbers and percentages of positive cases have greatly increased in Marion County. As of July 28, five UMC churches in our Central District of the Indiana UMC have chosen to 'reclose' in order to help stop the spread of the virus among their congregants. Our Bishop and Conference Superintendent have authorized pastors to use their discretion in 'reopening', phases of 'reopening' and 'reclosing.'

Good Shepherd will tentatively move into Phase 1a of 'reopening' on August 16. The details of Phase 1a are below. The summary is that we will tentatively continue to offer in person worship on Sunday morning at 9 am and will add a 'one room' Sunday School' in the sanctuary following the 9 am service. The 'one room' Sunday School in the sanctuary will be held 10:15-10:45 am and will be a discussion of the scripture and sermon of the day. This will allow us to offer a second 11 am service option when the 9 am service is full.

Bear in mind that if the numbers and situation in Marion County warrant, we will go back to online worship for as long as is needed to 'Do No Harm' to our congregants.

Peace,

Pastor Mark