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| **SEPTEMBER 12 UPDATE** |

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| Good afternoon MCRC! It is hard to believe that summer is now past and fall, along with its cooler temperatures, is upon us. Tomorrow as we gather for worship one last time outside, we will celebrate communion and install new office bearers. What a joy it has been to worship together outdoors. God has truly blessed us with incredible weather and a beautiful space in which to gather each Sunday. In preparation for our return to worship indoors, starting next Sunday, September 20, I wanted to update you on our plans.   **Seating**One of the joys of worshipping outside for these months is we had all the space we needed for our MCRC family and guests. In moving indoors, we are faced with the challenge of how to seat all who wish to gather and to do so appropriately physically distanced. Our sanctuary holds roughly 130 people when spaced appropriately. On Sunday mornings we have nearly 250 people in attendance! In order to worship at one service, we will fill the sanctuary to that capacity. Each week we will rotate which LiFE Groups are asked to worship in the fellowship hall, where the live service will be projected. Starting on the 20th, all those in ***LiFE Groups 1 & 2 are requested to worship in the fellowship hall.*** **Masks**We have grown accustomed to seeing masks. Children walk through school halls wearing masks. Shopping can’t occur without wearing one. Spectators at indoor sporting events wear them continually.  Addressing this challenge has not been easy.  We spent much time reading through your survey responses, discussing, and praying about how we ought to apply the governor’s July 15 directive to “require businesses, government offices and other indoor spaces open to the public to ensure that employees, contractors, volunteers, customers, and other members of the public wear a face mask that covers their mouth and nose while remaining inside these spaces.”  Although there are many opinions about the efficacy of masks and the dangers of COVID-19, the directive is clear that churches must require masks for gathering indoors, and so we, following this directive, will require masks for worship. We don’t believe this is an issue that calls for taking a stand contrary to those in governing authority.  We intend to diligently focus on what we can do together and pray we keep this in the forefront. We celebrate that we can…  Worship Pray Sing Read scripture  Play instruments Proclaim and hear God’s Word Take communion  We can be together! By October 22, the governor will review this directive, and likely will make an announcement regarding any changes to the directive. We pray that the health of the community, and the reduction in the spread of the virus will make masks and other physical distancing no longer necessary. Until that day, let’s celebrate what we can do, and continue to pray for the day when these limitations will be no more.  If you do not feel comfortable worshipping indoors, we will continue to offer a livestream via the internet. We do, however, pray that if you can, you will gather in person at church for worship.  God has called us to be together.  Although technology wonderfully provides a way to worship when we cannot physically be together, we pray we will seek to be together for worship when able. Community and fellowship are such critical parts of what God intended for the church (see Acts 2:42 and Hebrews 10:25).  **Nursery and Tot Church**For parents with young children, beginning September 20, we will open the nursery for all those ages 0-2. Many kindly noted on the survey that they would help care for our little ones. Thank you!  If you are able to help, more volunteers are always welcome. Please let the office know. Tot Church will start up on Sunday, October 4. Like the nursery, volunteers to help with this ministry are also needed.  So, as we look to the future, as we daily witness division all around, let us hold fast to the Word of God, and seek to live out Paul’s words to the Ephesians,   *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."  (Ephesians 4:2-5)*May God continue to unite us. May the witness of Christ’s church be strong and clear through these challenging times. On behalf of the Council and Worship Committee, Pastor Tim  |

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