



CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN INDIANA (*Disciples of Christ*)

Indiana Disciples Encouraged to Delay Resuming Worship Together

In his address to the state on May 1, Governor Eric Holcomb indicated that religious groups are being given permission to resume gathering for worship beginning May 8. He also said in the same address that his *preference* is that religious communities continue virtual and outdoor services. It is our strong preference and recommendation that Indiana Disciples congregations do not resume in person worship services until at least May 31, *if then*.

Our congregations have a high number of persons who are 65 years or older or have an underlying health condition that cause them to be more vulnerable to the COVID-19 coronavirus. Additionally, the social distancing requirements during this time, which have not been lifted either by the Governor or the Centers for Disease Control, greatly challenge our capacity to worship together in a normal fashion. You can read the state guidelines for how Indiana congregations can worship in this time by clicking this link:

https://backontrack.in.gov/files/BackOnTrack-IN_PlacesOfWorship.pdf.

Among the items listed is an expectation that 6 feet of separation be maintained at all times, side to side and front to back, which would generally reduce the capacity of our sanctuaries to 25% of the seating in the room. Other recommendations from the State of Indiana include

- The wearing of face masks;
- Deep cleaning and sanitizing of the building before and after each service;
- Hand sanitizer available throughout the building and actively used;
- No handshakes, hugs, or physical contact;
- No passing of any materials including bulletins, attendance pads, offering plates, or communion ware;
- Suspending coffee and fellowship times;
- Marking entrances and exits to the building one-way;
- Suspending the use of choirs and praise teams. (Congregational singing is also not encouraged by some health officials);
- Not engaging in Sunday School for children while public schools are suspended and avoiding contact with children and persons 65 years or older.

The Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthian Church said, "All things are lawful," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other." (I Corinthians 10:23-24) We believe that this is a moment to acknowledge that while it may be "lawful" for our congregations to resume in person worship, it may not be beneficial or wise to do so. None of us would want to take advantage of the opportunity to gather for worship and by so doing inadvertently do harm to others by exposing them to this virus.

Consequently, we believe that there is **wisdom in waiting**, and thus we encourage your congregation to continue to connect with each other through social media, phone, and email. You might also use cards and letters too. That would be a communication tool the Apostle Paul would know and affirm.

We offer our continual prayers for you and your congregation in these days.

Rick Spleth
Regional Minister

Carolyn Reed
Associate Regional Minister