



We aspire to be beacons of God's love and truth ...

Pastor Update, Coronavirus Letter 8

Session Approves Recommendation for Outdoor Worship Gathering

July 31, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of FPC Moorestown,

For months, I've carried a vision in my mind of a time when we can return to our sanctuary and Miller Commons to worship God together. I can easily see people in the pews or chairs. I'm getting to know you well enough to put most of you in your favorite place. I imagine us together and I hear us singing these familiar words of the hymn:

*We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing;
Sing praises to His Name; He forgets not His own.*

How good it will be when we can gather together, for there is certain comfort and strength that's found when you sit with your sisters and brothers in Christ. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his classic *Life Together*, "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer."

I realize that I'm preaching to the choir and many of you have expressed your desire to come back to church on Sunday mornings. While we may not be ready to experience all of this vision, I'm pleased to tell you that on Tuesday, July 28, our Session unanimously approved plans for in-person outside worship beginning on Sunday, August 30.

Working to Safely Re-Open

For months, numerous work groups comprised of Session members, staff, and assorted members of Trustees, Deacons and our usher team have diligently addressed the numerous challenges we face amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The work group tasked with figuring out how we can safely re-open for worship has had a bewildering number of details to consider. All along, the mutual health and safety of our members and friends have been the primary concerns.

On Sunday, August 30, we'll begin offering an outdoor worship service at 8:30 a.m. in the courtyard between Miller Commons and the sanctuary. This worship service will last about 30 minutes and will include music, prayer, and a sermon. Every week we will continue to live stream our Sunday morning worship service at 9:30 a.m. Those who come to the outdoor service will be asked to physically distance

and wear masks. Please bring your own chairs. Those who need to can park in the lot nearest the sanctuary while all others should use the large parking lot.

All participants will be asked to sign a one-time Waiver and Health Screening Questionnaire, prior to the outdoor reopening, as part of a pre-registration process. Both forms and pre-registration may be easily completed online.

Fall Kickoff

On Sunday, September 13, we're planning one large outdoor worship service on the lawn in front of the sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. for our Fall Kickoff. We plan to live stream this special worship service gathering!

In the coming weeks, we'll provide you with full details for participating in outdoor worship and communion. We'll likely maintain this schedule through the end of October. We hope to be ready for some form of indoor worship by the first Sunday of November.

For now, I'm grateful that we are able to offer live stream worship with all the improvements we've made in recent months. Please continue to ask God for His wisdom for all of us, especially the leaders who serve our congregation. Thank you for your generous and consistent financial support. Please keep it up! Sometime soon, perhaps on August 30, we'll also sing these concluding words of "We Gather Together":

*We all do extol Thee, Thou Leader triumphant,
And pray that Thou still our Defender will be;
Let Thy congregation escape tribulation;
Thy Name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free!*

Affectionately yours in Christ,

Stuart H. Spencer, Pastor