



## New and Different World

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As we are preparing to resume in-person worship services, the leadership team has been working hard to consider all of the dynamics of what it means to be together again. As a part of this work, I have talked with many pastors across the state. One pastor whose church has been meeting for a couple of weeks described coming back into their building. “It’s just weird,” he told me. In many ways, our world has drastically changed and our gatherings will have to adjust to the new reality. He lamented not being able to greet people in the same way as COVID-19 still poses a threat in our community. As we continue to adjust to this reality, we may feel a sense of disappointment, loss, frustration, fatigue.



Let me encourage you to be patient. Certainly, being back at 309 E. Adams Street will be encouraging. It will be good to see each other and worship in one place. Yet, we will not be returning to the same environment we left on March 8. Throughout this edition of the Visitor, we will detail our return to the building. Please take the time to read through each article. We have also provided videos on the church YouTube channel to aid our return.

Finally, as we gather in July, we are pausing our Sermon on the Mount series in order to study Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi. The Philippians are dealing with loss. They are suffering persecution as well as mourning Paul’s imprisonment, fearing that he will be executed. Paul’s words have much to say to a church dealing with trials and tribulations. I hope this study will relate to all we have been experiencing in 2020. I am looking forward to engaging this letter with you in the coming weeks.

## Where and When

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1. Our first in-person worship service will be held on **Sunday, July 5** in the outdoor space between the sanctuary and the education building. We often refer to this area as *the circle drive*.
2. Worship services during the month of July will be held during our early worship hour only, **9:15 AM**.
3. There will be *no* nursery or childcare provided.
4. The services will be about 45 minutes in length.
5. Please bring your own outdoor chairs for seating.
6. You can enter the worship space from the Jefferson Street side. Four spaces located in the Northwest Bank Parking lot will be marked for handicap use.

## How

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We are a friendly, loving church family. Handshakes and hugs are commonplace as we gather for worship. In addition, we have missed being together for the past sixteen weeks. We have lots of catching up to do. At the same time, we must recognize the continued threat of COVID-19 in our midst. And many in our church family are in a high-risk group simply by age alone. We will need to exercise sensitivity and caution. Therefore, the CCT has agreed on the following:



Face masks are highly recommended. While there has been some controversy over masks, the Center for Disease Control encourages the use of masks in public gatherings (unless you are under 2 or have a condition that would restrict your breathing). Therefore, we strongly encourage you to wear a mask out of concern for others.



Social distancing will be essential. We will need to remain 6 feet away from those not in our family. Most of all, please respect the space and comfort level of others in our church family. Please avoid handshaking and hugs.



Please don't come if you have not been feeling well or have any of these symptoms: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.



Sanitary stations will be provided as you enter and exit.



There will be no bulletins or handouts.

Opinions regarding policies and procedures are varied. Sadly, it has become a political and divisive issue. Our hope is that we would submit ourselves to each other in this season.

“ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. — Philippians 2:3 NIV

## Why

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This season of uncertainty has raised many questions. Why have we waited until July to begin in-person services? Why are we coming back for in-person services now? Why are we meeting outside? When can we expect for programs to return to normal? These are valid questions without easy answers. Each church has been required to discern, to consider many factors in these matters. While we have consulted others, ultimately decisions have been made with our church family in mind.

Like many other churches with similar demographics, we have waited until Stage Five of the Indiana *Back on Track Plan* presented by our governor. This has given us time to watch other churches who decided to meet at an earlier date. We have been able to learn about policies and procedures that will best protect our congregation. The hope is to ease back into in-person worship services. Outside has been proven to be a safer environment for transmission of COVID-19. This will give us a chance to get used to coming together before entering the building. Once we come inside, we will need to implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures for the space used. There is still much to consider as we plan in this direction. However, a month of outside services will give us a chance to be physically together again.

Please know that the health and well-being of our church family has been at the forefront of our discerning. While a variety of opinions are certainly present in our church family, we hope that each person will consider the overall good of the entire church family.

## What If?

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Planning for building re-entry has been a process of research, prayer, discernment, and finally decision. There is still more work to be done, more questions to answer. Likely, this process will involve trying out new models and adjusting as we go along. And certainly there are *what ifs* even now.

**What if I am at high risk, sick, or not comfortable attending in person?** – Each service will be live streamed on the church website and YouTube channel. If any of these conditions apply to you, please participate in this manner. If you need technical help to view the live stream, please contact a church leader. We will do our best to help you.

**What if it rains?** – If inclement weather prevents us from holding an outside service, we will notify the congregation of the cancelation through email/website two hours before the service. If we make this decision ahead of time, a live stream will be provided for you to watch at home at 9:15 AM. In the event of a last-minute or during-service storm, we will dismiss everyone and post resources (online sermon, music) for later viewing.

## What Else?

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As we get back to work or back into the community, we are happy to be moving forward in gathering as a church. But what else can we do?

One thing is to realize that not everyone will be joining us these next few weeks as we move toward our new reality back inside the church. Some of our elderly and high-risk church family folks as well as some families with young children will decide not to venture out to our outdoor services in July. While leaders of CCT have worked hard to check in with our members, extra calls from others to converse with them, see if they need groceries, or share a cup of coffee on the porch are ways to help.

In our community, two vitally important roles able-bodied adults and teens can provide involve helping hungry families who are still struggling. Here are a couple of ways you can help:

1. **Serve hot meals at Blood 'n Fire with Inside Out Community Development Corporation.** After 15 weeks, community volunteers have served over 20,000 hot meals between 4:30 and 6:00 PM six days per week (Monday–Saturday)! Blood 'n Fire is at 300 N. Madison St. Call 765-747-0872 to get more information and to sign up to help. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.
2. **Distribute food to families at the Ross Community Center,** a community center on the southwest side of Muncie in the Thomas Park/Avondale neighborhood. Food distribution is on Friday afternoons and volunteers are needed to pack boxes and give them to people waiting in cars. There have been more than 500 households waiting to pick up food on many of the Friday afternoons! The facility is at 1110 W. Tenth Street. Call 765-747-4741 to learn about helping.

Both of these organizations are providing safe spaces and observing health practices to protect volunteers.

If you decide you would like to help and would like someone to help you get more information, contact MaryAnne Bayer, chair of Outreach Ministries. She is at 765-289-5553.

## What's Next

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Another question in your mind might be about programs like childcare, children's programs, Sunday school, life groups, and other ongoing ministries. We celebrate that many

of these ministries have continued over the past few months. Children's Sunday school lessons have been available each week. The youth group has continued to meet over Zoom for Sunday school. A few life groups have started meeting in backyards. These ministries will continue through July in the same way that they have been functioning. There is much to consider before we are able to resume these ministries in the building. The CCT continues to learn from school systems, day care facilities, and other community organizations. While we are unable to provide specifics, we are hoping to phase these ministries back into the life of the church in time. If you are involved in a Sunday school class, perhaps you would consider meeting over Zoom. If you are a volunteer in children or youth ministries, please let your ministry leader know if you are willing to continue in your role when these ministries resume.

## **YouTube Channel**

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Several videos have been produced to help in this transition. You can find these videos on the church YouTube Channel

Please go to the channel and SUBSCRIBE! This is where all church videos will go, including sermons, music, announcements, children's lessons, etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/fbcmuncieorg>

## **Facebook Live Prayer Time**

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During this season of social distancing, we continue a weekly Facebook Live prayer time! Look for one of our smiling faces **every Wednesday** at **7:00 PM**. Make sure to like our church Facebook page, First Baptist Church Muncie Indiana, to be able to watch and share any prayer requests or praises.

<https://www.facebook.com/firstbaptistmuncie>

## **Philippians Series**

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- ▷ July 05 - Reframing Our Perspective (Philippians 1:1–11)
- ▷ July 12 - Whatever Happens (Philippians 1:12–30)
- ▷ July 19 - Unity and Humility (Philippians 2:1–11)
- ▷ July 26 - Working Out Salvation (Philippians 2:12–30)

## July Birthdays

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We would like to say Happy Birthday to the following people in the month of July. Please let them know that you are thinking of them on their special day.

07/01 - Shirley Pittenger

07/04 - Connor French

07/05 - Ian Davis

07/06 - David Rodriguez

07/06 - Ward Head

07/09 - Betty Brown

07/09 - Kaes Petroviak

07/11 - Barb Eidson

07/11 - Walter Frey

07/13 - Joanne Sewell

07/15 - Luke Thurston

07/29 - Chad Massoth

07/29 - Doug Gregg

07/31 - Coby Anderson

07/31 - Finn Massoth

07/31 - Larry Fouch