

Dear Lakewood Family,

It is difficult to believe that we have spent a little more than five months living in our new "Corona world," and it has not been easy. I think we have all felt the weight of this season in many different ways, and most of us would probably say that we are tired. It appears that we are stuck with COVID-19 and many of the changes and inconveniences that have come with it for the indefinite future, but this also means that we have some great opportunities ahead of us to adapt, and invent, and create new ways of being church and doing ministry together. I am excited about that as we enter the next phase of our journey through Covid times this month by returning to in-person worship on August 16 and the reopening of our preschool on August 25.

As we prepare for reopening, please know that many prayers have been said, conversations have been had, and plans have been made. The Session, the Reopening Committee, and the Administration Ministry have been particularly involved in this work. The plans that have been made represent good faith efforts to move forward with care. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to bring those to me and/or your elders. Plans can always be amended and changed if need be, and there may indeed be things we simply didn't think of or improvements that can be made as we go along. No one's interests have been intentionally overlooked or excluded. I am grateful for your patience with the process and ask for your continued patience and grace as we work our way into resuming activities and creating new ones.

Initially, *we will only be opened for Sunday worship*. Our worship gathering size will be limited to 50 people the first week, and we plan to increase that number to 75 the following week. Masks will be required in the Sanctuary, and the designated entrances and exits will be the doors on either side of the Sanctuary near the chancel. A children's message will be included in worship, but the nursery will not be opened and there will be no children's worship. The service will begin at 10 am as usual. Since we will also be live-streaming, please arrive in time to be seated and ready to begin worship by 10. Adult Sunday school classes and other group meetings will continue to happen online, but we are already talking about how and when to restart other Sunday morning programs, special services, and activities that normally occur throughout the week. You will be informed about the plans as they are created and approved by the Session. Though the uncertainty that comes with COVID requires patience and flexibility, I'm hopeful that many of our other church activities and services will not be delayed for much longer.

Because we have embraced the ministry and presence of Lakewood Presbyterian Preschool, there have been and are some special considerations that have been made in our re-opening plans. In particular, we will need to use special care in our shared space in the education building. In order to help maintain a safe environment for everyone who uses the building, some weekday protocols have been put in place for the hours between 8 am and 3 pm. To help limit and monitor traffic in and out of the building, we are asking *all visitors* to buzz using Door 2 (east side of the playground) and wait to be let into the building. Everyone entering the building will need to have their temperature taken and recorded before entering and a mask will be required while inside. If you need to come to the office to see the pastor or one of the staff during school hours, we are asking that rather than dropping by you please call ahead to make an appointment. While I know these steps may feel like an unnecessary inconvenience, our goal with these policies is

not to keep people out but to try, instead, to limit opportunities for transmission as much as possible. We are concerned for the safety and well-being of you, our church members, *and* the families that our church serves through the preschool.

One other forthcoming change that the Session has approved is re-keying our church buildings and changing the security codes. This decision was made in part to help with monitoring opportunities for Covid transmission and also as part of an effort to update church security. Over the years, many keys have been handed out to church members *and* non-members who had reasons to have access to the building. At this point, we simply do not have good records of who has keys to the building, and we would like to remedy that. You will be informed when the locks and codes will be changed. Keys and codes will be issued to all active elders and staff. If you *need* a key for ministry or some other church purpose, you may request one from the office. Again, the goal is not to keep people out. Rather, we are interested in keeping both our buildings and the people in them safe and secure.

I'd like to end this letter by highlighting some of the many positive things that have been happening at Lakewood during these months of Covid. It can be easy to focus on the hard parts, but God is faithful, and you have been faithful as God's people. In mission, we have made and sent masks to hundreds of people who needed them; we have partnered with UCOM to have a food distribution in our parking lot and you have continued to donate and give financially to UCOM and Sulzbacher; as a result of the parking lot food pantry, we received a \$7k gift to be used to further assist hunger ministries; we partnered with Lakewood UMC and collected 3300lbs of food that went to UCOM in August; we have continued to host the Meals on Wheels program; our youth and children and college students have gathered for Zoom meetings; adult Bible studies have met over Zoom; worship services have been held every Sunday online and we have purchased and updated equipment that will allow us to continue to broadcast live services online; we've been blessed by the gifts of many musicians and singers in worship; church members and your pastor have received justice ministry training by attending the Direct Action Regional Training Seminar on Zoom; relationships between church members have grown as they have worked together in ministry and met together in Zoom meetings; we are in the black financially as a result of your faithful and generous giving, reduced expenses, and after receiving the PPP loan (which we expect to be almost completely forgiven).

As we continue to move through these difficult days, there is much for which we can give thanks to God, and never-ending opportunities to become more like Jesus and to share the hope that is ours through him. I pray for you regularly and ask for your prayers as well.

May God's grace abound in all of you and Christ's peace be with you.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Joy