

May 20, 2020

Members and Friends of Kirk in the Hills:

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Session met on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at which time the COVID-19 Response Team (members Bob Beck, Nancy Lau, Suzi Artzberger, and Nate Conway) presented a plan to return to the Kirk for worship in a phased approach.

At this time, we are unable to mark each phase with a specific date since the phases are based on conditions and a timeline established by the State of Michigan. As indicated previously, the health and safety of staff, members, friends, and visitors of the Kirk are Session's top priority.

As we have learned and relearned, everything is subject to change when it comes to COVID-19. However, in accordance with the guidelines of the state of Michigan (see phases below), the Session approved the following for worship at Kirk in the Hills:

The phases from MI Safe Start are:

Phase I Uncontrolled Growth

Phase II Persistent Spread

Phase III Flattening – Current State

All worship conducted from worship participants' homes via Zoom and recording. Worship provided each Sunday through internet streaming and broadcast on radio.

Phase IV Improving – hopefully soon after May 28

Worship will continue to be recorded (perhaps on the Kirk campus) and streamed on Sundays, and monthly communion will be held via Zoom. We also plan to start a Drive-In Carillon Concert Series with hopes to begin June 6 (with bagpiper!) and are looking into holding a drive-in worship service.

Phase V Containing

Worship outside (location on campus to be determined) will commence while practicing social distancing. People will be invited to print their own bulletin at home or use their mobile device and bring their own seats for worship. Ushers will direct people to sit at a distance from one another. Cloth face-masks and no-touch alternatives for collecting offering will be arranged. There are many other details to be determined and implemented for when we move to this phase. We will move intentionally and cautiously into this phase. The Kirk will also continue creating a prerecorded service for streaming and radio.

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Phase VI Post-Pandemic

The Kirk will provide worship in the building with mild social distancing protocols. The Sanctuary, Refectory, and Cedarholm Chapel may be used in combination to accommodate social distancing requirements.

This information might create more questions than answers—there is just no way to be as specific as we would like to be at this time, but we wanted to do right by the community and let you know where we are right now. I hope everyone will be considerate of the myriad of details we are working through to make the best decisions for Kirk in the Hills and the community we love.

As God ran with Moses through a parted Red Sea with the Egyptians on his heels, and as God did not allow death to have the final word with Jesus, and as Saul’s life was turned around on the Road to Damascus causing his name to change to Paul, so God is with us!

We are learning patience, a deeper sense of community, what it means to lose something and what it means to find something new! I am overwhelmed by how Kirk in the Hills has NOT been a closed church over the last several months. We have been open to loving, serving, praying, giving, and worshipping in ways we could never have imagined.

We all look forward to being together. It will not always be this way. The day will come when I can stand on the chancel steps and say the words, “Welcome to worship. Welcome to the Kirk. Welcome Home.” That will be a great day.

Stay warm,

Rev. Dr. Nate Phillips
Senior Pastor/ Head of Staff

Bob Beck
Clerk of Session

MI SAFE START PLAN

