

## **Re-Gathering of First Christian Church Set for Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### **Greetings in the Name of Jesus the Christ!**

In light of the Governor's decision on Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup> to lift all restrictions from Illinois churches and to allow them to gather for public worship once again, the FCC leadership team has decided it is time to safely reinstate onsite worship services at our building on 1421 Beard Street in Beardstown, Illinois. Not to split hairs, but we are choosing to use the term "*re-gathering*" instead of "reopening" because FCC was never really closed – just scattered!

In order to keep people safe as they gather for onsite worship services, the Illinois Department of Public Health has provided certain guidelines for resuming worship. Having reviewed them, we believe it is wise to incorporate many of them as we re-gather. It's important to realize that we won't be perfect as we come together, but we pledge to do our best to be as safe as possible.

Since this pandemic and the near closing of society as we know it is still new to all of us, we find ourselves in a constant state of learning and improving plans. *None of us have been here before so it is incumbent upon all of us to have a flexible, positive spirit!* Thank you for your patience and understanding. We have decided to disseminate information in the context of key questions.

### **When will onsite services begin again and what will the service times be?**

We will have two worship services on Sunday morning at the usual times of 8:30 and 10:15 AM. *Our first re-gathering service will be on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>!*

### **Will it be a normal, full worship service?**

Even though services will be shortened in length in order to clean adequately between services – and will be absent of physical contact – we still plan to offer an engaging worship experience of music, teaching, prayer, communion and fellowship that we have come to expect at FCC.

### **Should we invite friends to come to church with us?**

Absolutely you should! With the current unrest that so many people are facing at this time due to the COVID-19 epidemic, people are seeking God today like no other time in their lives. Let's reach out to them and share the good news!

### **How will seating in the auditorium occur?**

We will practice social distancing as much as possible. For now, we will not be able to pack the auditorium with people and allow everyone to sit wherever they desire. Households and those who travel to church in the same vehicle will be able to sit together, but there will be a distance of six feet between these groups of people. In order to seat as many as possible in the auditorium while practicing social distancing, an usher will assist you in finding a seat. We ask that you please be respectful of their direction during this time. Also, we have a plan in place for an overflow if more people show up for a service than we can safely social distance for.

### **Will there still be online worship for those not comfortable with in-person worship yet?**

Absolutely yes! *First Christian Church is now both an ONSITE and an ONLINE church!* A recorded service will be posted online by Sunday and we encourage anyone who isn't ready to return to onsite worship yet, and those who are unable to attend for other reasons, to participate with us in our online services. You never have to miss church again!

### **Will we be encouraged to practice social distancing?**

Yes you will. As exciting as it will be to see our church family again, participants are urged to respect the six-foot guideline for social distancing to the extent possible. Out of consideration for the safety and comfort of other worshippers, we discourage the use of hugs and handshakes until a time when it is deemed safe to do so. We understand how difficult this will be for some, but the Bible repeatedly calls us to put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own. For such a time as this, we can find another way to connect with our fellow worshippers.

### **Will children's ministry be offered during the worship services?**

Understanding how difficult it is for little ones to practice social distancing, we will not offer a nursery or 252 Kids programming at this time. We are investigating a safe and effective way to provide children's programming during the worship service in the near future. We will still post the 252 curriculum online for parents to access at home. Children are encouraged to attend the worship service with their parents. You may want to bring a coloring book or quiet activity for your little ones and if you are concerned about them being a distraction, families are welcome to view the service in the fellowship hall. Even though we aren't staffing a nursery, it will be open for parents to care for the needs of their infants. Social distancing will be observed there as well.

### **Will the facility be cleaned and sanitized regularly?**

Absolutely it will. We have a detailed plan for thorough cleaning before and after each service. We will also have hand sanitizing stations located throughout the facility. If you would like to volunteer to serve on a "*sanitizing crew*", we would certainly appreciate it. Please call Kellie in the church office at 323-1677 to get your name on the list.

### **Will gloves and masks be required to enter the building?**

We will not require this, but those desiring to wear protective gear are certainly welcome to do so. In fact, we will keep some masks and gloves on hand for those who need them. Having said this, our greeters and ushers will wear a mask and gloves to better observe the practice of social distancing while they assist you in entering and departing the facility.

### **Will the "Good Cup" be open?**

We feel it is important for people who feel comfortable in doing so to connect safely with others between services. We believe the safest option for this is in the parking lot so we are looking into the possibility of setting up a station outside the church building where free cold beverages and coffee would be served. Those choosing to gather would be asked to observe the six-foot social distancing guideline. Breakfast bar workers would wear gloves and masks and serve the drinks as there would be no self-service stations.

### **Will communion be made available?**

The Lord's Supper is a very important part of our worship service, so we will take every possible measure to provide this in a safe manner. We will make prepackaged communion available [and bulletins] on a table for people as they arrive for worship. You are more than welcome to bring your own elements with you to worship or you can observe communion at home.

### **Will we take up an offering?**

We will collect an offering at each service. There will be designated containers at the entryways in the auditorium for you to place your offering in. You can also give online, direct deposit from your bank, or you can mail your offering to the church. The "*Change For a Dollar*" containers will also be in their usual spots on the tables at the east and west auditorium doors.

### **What about parking and entering the building?**

You can self-park and enter the building through the south and west entrances and doors will be opened for you by our greeters. Attendance will be recorded so we can follow up on your visit.

### **Should anyone NOT attend our services?**

Out of consideration for the safety of others, we ask that you self-check your temperature before attending onsite worship. If you have a fever, if you are sick, or if you have a weakened immune system, we are asking you to stay home and participate in our online service.

### **Will I be allowed to attend worship if I have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?**

As the virus has spread for several weeks now, it is possible that some have been in contact with someone who has had it. And those who work in the medical field have potentially been around the virus. It's possible that some of us have been in contact with someone who has the virus and neither of us knew it. ***So, we are asking that if you knowingly have recently had close contact with a family member or co-worker who has contracted COVID-19 that you would worship online for a couple weeks prior to attending onsite services.*** Everyone else is encouraged to use their own discretion concerning safety for themselves and others.

We feel blessed to be able to provide online worship and we believe strongly in our commitment in continuing to do so, but we miss the practice of gathering the church family in one place to worship our Heavenly Father together and to encourage and strengthen each other. And though our time together won't be exactly what we're accustomed to and would desire it to be, there's just something about the Body of Christ coming together and lifting our lives in unison to the Father. Acts 2:1 says, "*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.*" If you read the rest of the chapter, you see what God did in their midst. And Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "*Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another . . .*" So for those who feel comfortable in re-gathering, we can't wait to greet you on June 14<sup>th</sup>!

**In His Service,  
FCC Elders**