

August 28, 2020

From: Pastor Allen

Dear Friends,

At its August meeting, the session again spent time discussing the possibilities for resuming in-person worship. We heard from the Emergency Response Team who shared that the case rate in our area has begun to recede. As of last Monday, the average rate of infection per 100,000 residents of Washington County had, over the course of a couple of weeks, fallen from 32.91 to 17.67. While that's wonderful news, it still leaves a significant distance between where we are and 10.0—the rate at which the CDC suggests that in-person gatherings are relatively safe if adequate safety precautions are in place and followed. Subsequently, in the middle of this week our region experienced another spike in cases.

Some local public school systems are about begin a limited resumption of in-person classes, and some high school sporting events are happening (including football games with fans in attendance). ETSU has welcomed a limited number of students back to campus, as well, and they have, as expected, immediately seen a number of cases surface. Because these changes will almost certainly raise that declining case rate, the ERT recommended that the session postpone setting a target date for return to public worship. After discussion, the session concurred with the ERT's recommendation. That applied to the Salt Shaker meals, as well.

The session and I know how discouraging this is for everyone. It's disappointing for us. No one *wants* to keep going this way. But given the facts of a persistently high case rate and of our high-risk membership, the unanimous decision was to wait and reassess in two or three weeks. That means we will have some kind of called meeting prior to our September stated meeting.

In the meantime, just like CL&M is continuing to make plans for Salt Shakers, the Implementation Team is busy solidifying its plans to welcome people in limited numbers to worship services as soon as the session decides to do that. As that time approaches, we will share the specific details of that plan with you so everyone knows what to expect.

We will get through this, Friends. The day will come when, all together, we will sing, share communion, eat family lunches, shake hands, and hug. For the moment, though, we ask for your patience, your understanding, and most of all, your prayers.

God's blessings, peace, and well-being be with all of you and those whom you love.

***Pastor Allen***

### **JPC NOTES:**

***Let's Help Larry!*** Larry Childress in the final stages of his Ph.D. program at ETSU. He is studying in the experimental psychology program and need help gathering data for his dissertation on grief. If you would be willing, please take about 20-30 minutes sometime soon to fill out his survey. To take the survey, simply click on the link below, and follow the instructions. If you have any questions, Larry's contact information is on the instruction page of the survey. If you know of others who might take the survey, please feel free to forward it to them. Thank you!

Take the Survey: <https://etsuredcap.etsu.edu/surveys/?s=RLAYYRD3MA>

### **Prayer Lists:**

#### **Church Members:**

Evelyn Adams, Kathie Dameron, Pam Dunn, Wilma Florence, Hal Knight, Charlotte McDonald, Jeri Paolini, Jill Sauceman, Bob

Scheu, Richard Schwerdtfeger, Cheryl Smith, Tony Smith,  
Beverlee Wightman

**On-going Prayers for Members:**

Summer Buchanan, Sara Nan Byrd, Betty Correll, Joseph  
Dykes, Alisa & Barbara Goolsby, Elizabeth Hoss, Cherry Smith,  
Larry Smith, Ruth Verhegge

**Church Prayer List of Family & Friends and Relatives**

Stephanie Barnes (cousin of Mary Bray and Karen Welch), Ashley  
Brantner (granddaughter of Richard and Ronda Schwerdtfeger),  
Mike Bray (brother of Mary Bray and Karen Welch), Delbert Elliott,  
a friend of the DRC, Audrey Sinisi (related to the Comer family)

**One More August Birthday!**

Patty Starkey 30

**September Birthdays**

Betty Kirchner	3
Sharon Anderson	3
Eva Garst	10
Bob Williams	12
Jim Pahr	13
Carter Florence	16
Chuck Collins	18
Marcy Hawley	18
Bob Browning	19
Andy Hixson	19
Ben Huff	21
Ronda Schwerdtfeger	21
Rick Gibson	22
Terry Welch	23
Linda Brothers	25
Pat McLean	25
Emily Webb	30