

## Regathering for Worship

*Great thanks to the congregation for nearly 250 survey responses and countless other conversations among the comeback strategy team, staff, and church leaders, for all you have contributed to our conversation in this season. This FAITH MATTERS is designed to outline what prayerful discernment has revealed as we look forward to regathering for in-person worship.*

Dear Church family,

After many lengthy conversations and lots of prayer **we will reopen for in-person worship on Sunday August 2.**

Regathering at the beginning of August makes sense for many reasons: It allows us more time to prepare, everything from volunteers to hand sanitizer stations, from what worship will be like to how we will practice distancing in the sanctuary. We've also benefited from the experience of other churches who have already opened. Be assured that we are absolutely committed to making our worship services the safest place to be on a Sunday morning.

For this reason, we are going to take every precaution necessary, including requiring everyone to *wear a face mask*. As your Lead Pastor, I'm more concerned about reducing the risk of someone getting Covid-19, than making someone mad for requiring a mask. *This is one of the most visible ways that we can show our love for one another.*

We will reopen August 2 with services at **9:00am** and **11:00am**, with a blend of contemporary and traditional elements. They will be designed much like what we have offered online for the past three months. We will continue to film our services for a Facebook Live Watch Party at **5:00pm Sunday evening**, in addition to posting on our website and Facebook page. We will kick off our reopening with a new sermon series I'm calling *Flip the Script*.

I realize that some of you will not be ready to return to worship immediately, and that's completely understandable. *Please do what is best for you to take care of yourself* until it is safe for you to return. Our comeback strategy team has been hard at work on our plan, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. **This Faith Matters newsletter is entirely dedicated to answering your questions and informing you about what to expect.**

While this difficult time has changed almost everything, *there is one thing that has not changed: our mission to share the good news of Jesus Christ and make disciples.* Right now, people everywhere are searching for something solid and trustworthy to build their lives on. From Genesis to Revelation we read the stories of people like us who have been brought to their knees by hardship and suffering, and it was the steadfast love of God that sustained them. We are in God's hands. Our church is in God's hands. We are stronger together. Despite frustrations and obstacles, God has blessed us in ways we could not imagine when this began. As I write this, I feel the inadequacy of my words to express my gratitude for you, our congregational leaders, and our dedicated staff and pastors. Will you join me in drawing near to God, listening for God's voice, and seeking God's wisdom for our living in these days?

With much love,  
David Emery



As Harvard Avenue Christian Church begins to return our facility to use for church activities, our programs and worship experience will be different for now. We want you to know what to expect as we begin to gather together again.

*We will continue to evaluate and consider ways to move forward when appropriate for classes, meetings, and other in-person gatherings. Our staff and leadership teams are working to maintain spiritual connection, faith development, and pastoral care during these unusual times.*

While the worship service may be a little different for now, we remain committed to keeping Harvard Avenue a place to **Be Loved, Believe, and Become.**



## WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE to be back together for worship?

### ***When will we resume worship services?***

Our target date to resume in-person worship services is **Sunday, August 2**. Please be aware that other factors, including our ability to obtain critical supplies and make necessary adjustments to our facilities, and the state of pandemic conditions in the community may require a change to that date.

### ***What worship services will be available?***

Our worship gatherings at **9:00am** and **11:00am** on Sundays will resume in the sanctuary. These services will be a mix of traditional and contemporary elements, and will vary in composition from week to week. Our ministers, staff, and guests will continue to bring God's word through messages and music.

A NEW option will be a Watch Party on Facebook Live, **Sundays at 5pm**, which will allow us to greet each other as we arrive online to worship together. The week's sermon and music highlights, and the full worship service, will still be **online**, posted to the Harvard Ave website and Facebook page weekly.

### ***What time should I arrive for worship?***

Doors will be unlocked fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of worship. Please maintain appropriate physical distance (6 feet) if you arrive earlier and are waiting outside.

### ***Will Sunday School / Youth / Children & Nursery services be available Sunday mornings?***

Adult Sunday School classes will remain online at this time (if your class would like assistance with this option, please contact Courtney Richards).

In-person Children Worship & Wonder and Sunday School activities for children and youth also remain online at this time. *Children and youth should remain with their families during worship.*

The Youth Center and Children's Wing are mostly closed for now; the exception: Our Children's Ministries Team and Nursery Staff are prepared to offer **during-worship care** at 9:00am and 11:00am *for children 3.5yrs (42months) and younger.*

Harvard Ave will continue to evaluate options; we look forward to resuming a fuller schedule when we are adequately prepared and it makes sense to do so.

### ***What has been done to make our facility ready for our return?***

Our facilities have been cleaned and sanitized in preparation for opening the Church. Our weekly cleaning practices have been updated to comply with CDC guidelines. Additionally, our cleaning team will disinfect bathrooms, handrails, doors and other high traffic areas.

### ***What will I see when I come to church?***

There will be some visible signs of our updates and changes as we return to the building:

- **Face masks** (covering nose and mouth) will be required
- **Entry and exit signs** will direct to and from the building
- Signage around the campus will remind congregants about **distancing**
- **Hand sanitizing** stations will be available
- Many areas of the building will remain closed including the Family Life Center, offices, The Orchard, and the kitchen
- **No food or beverages** will be available
- Reduced access to restrooms

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## **WHAT DO I NEED TO DO to be ready for worship?**

### ***How can I prepare for entering the Church for worship?***

Everyone who comes into the facility plays a part in looking out for the well-being of their brothers and sisters in Christ. Consider your own health and well-being. If you are immune-compromised, have underlying conditions, or are hesitant in returning to worship for any reason, you're encouraged to stay where you are and share in our online services from your residence. ***We love you and want you to choose the best option for yourself.***

For those choosing to worship on-site at the Church, you need to:

- **assess** – If you are exposed, ill, or caring for someone who is high-risk or immune-compromised, please stay home and seek appropriate care and guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/>
- **temperature** – Please take your temperature before coming to Church and if it is above 100.3 degrees, please remain at home.
- **physical distancing** - Individuals and families are asked to maintain *physical distance of six feet (6 ft.)* or more from other people including sitting in the worship space, entering and exiting the facility, and occupying small spaces including hallways and restrooms.
- **sanitizing hands** - Each person is asked to sanitize their hands before and after touching surfaces inside the Church. Sanitizer will be available, as will soap in the restrooms.
- **masks and no-touch policy** – *HACC is requiring those who attend to wear face coverings or masks that cover both nose and mouth.* We have a limited supply of masks available for you at the Church. It will be so nice to see friends that you haven't seen in months. However, please refrain from shaking hands or hugging them and adhere to a no-touch policy for now.
- **Children** - Parents are asked to keep children close to them at all times and observe the six-foot (6 ft.) distancing rule from others.

### ***What changes should I expect when I attend worship services?***

- **entry:** Use the South Entry (nearest the sanctuary).
- **seating:** We will use every other row for seating.
- **spacing:** Please allow three (3) seats on either side of you or your family. Please continue to practice physical distancing, leaving at least 6 feet between families while you are in the building.
- **food & drink:** No food or drink will be allowed in our worship service.
- **greetings:** Please only use non-physical greetings (such as a wave instead of a handshake).
- **bulletins:** The order of service and announcements will be provided on screen. No paper copies will be available.
- **music:** We will still enjoy music from our talented staff, band, ensembles, and guests. For now, we will forego congregational and choral singing in our services.
- **tithes and offerings:** You will find collection boxes in the back of the sanctuary. Online giving is encouraged and giving by mail is always available.
- **communion:** A key element for Disciples, we will continue to share communion with all who are comfortable joining in. We are changing the way communion is served to allow for healthier practices.
- **duration:** Services will last around 45 minutes.

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## **WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?**

### ***Are face masks required to attend worship services?***

**Yes.** Worshippers are required to wear masks or face coverings over both nose and mouth, and we will have a limited supply of disposable masks available for you at the Church. Our ministers and staff, worship leaders and volunteers will have masks on unless they are leading a worship activity where removal is warranted.

Per CDC guidelines, masks may not protect the wearer, but may keep the wearer from spreading the virus to others. *We support masks as a way to demonstrate our care for one another.* We will continue to evaluate this requirement as conditions in our community change.

### ***Will restrooms be available?***

Restroom access will be reduced temporarily. Here are some simple guidelines for restrooms:

- **Give way:** If you encounter someone else, maintain recommended 6 feet of distance wherever possible.
- **Mask up:** Since restrooms are confined space, and may require closer proximity, wear a mask to help enhance the safety of others around you.
- **Wash up:** Make sure to thoroughly wash your hands with plenty of soap for at least 20 seconds.

### **What accommodations are available if I need help getting into or out of the building?**

For our members and guests that need extra time to enter or exit the building, or who require the shortest possible distance to accommodate mobility or other issues, please contact the Harvard Avenue office to make arrangements.

### **What should I do if someone in my home tests positive for COVID-19 or is asked to quarantine due to likely COVID-19 exposure?**

- **If you have attended a HACC function**, please alert our pastoral staff (David Emery, Courtney Richards, Kevin Howe) so that we may inform our congregation as necessary, activate our response and recovery plans, and hold you in prayer. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
- **returning to worship** - After following the CDC guidelines for when you can be around others, we will rejoice with you when you can rejoin us. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>

## **What Will It Take?**

*What will it take to keep this at bay? What will it take to get back to normal? What will it take to travel, teach, eat out, learn, shop, play like we want to?*

I don't know.

If there's anything I've learned since March 13 - the day we wrote to you to say that all worship and ministry within the church facility would be suspended, more than three months ago now – it's that **every single day reveals more that I simply do not know.**

What to say to someone when we have to cancel or delay a funeral.

Why the audio and the video don't sync at first ... and then suddenly work just fine.

When my hair got this completely gray.

Why I cannot remember to click all the boxes on the page to create the same exact website post I made last week.

Where the best light is to be seen on a video call and which shelves and walls provide the best backdrop.

Who has the best line of CDC-approved cleansers and who prints the best decals and can you get a mask with a chalice logo.

AND? In those same three months and more? **Every single day reveals the wonder of this call, the beauty of this community, and the depths of compassion and grace of which we really are capable.**

So what will it take for us to get back to worship together?

**TIME.** We're waiting a few weeks past our original goal date because it's the best thing to do.

**TALENT.** *We need you.* We'll need you to help share the news. We'll need you to help serve within our new-for-now worship experience. If you want to volunteer in some way, let me know!

**TRUST.** The worship service we left on March 8 is not the one we return to on (we hope) August 2. *But God will be here with us, and at home with us, and in between with us.* Always God.

**TREASURE.** Your gifts still matter. Worship and ministry and program and outreach look so different right now in every way. And do does your generosity. *Thank you for the ways you are staying true to your pledge of faith and of financial resources.*

*What will it take?* It may take weeks and months and maybe even more for us to feel like ourselves again. And at the same time it's quite possible that this will take us to a whole new level of **BE**-ing the be-loved, believing, becoming community at Harvard Avenue.

Most of all, as we look forward to regathering, it will take the shape of **THANKSGIVING**. Whether you continue to gather in your home, or decide to join us in the sanctuary. Whether you do so right away, or wait until it feels like the best moment for you. What I know without a doubt is this: It will look like a Great Thanksgiving, where we lift up our hearts, where we give God thanks and praise. -- Courtney

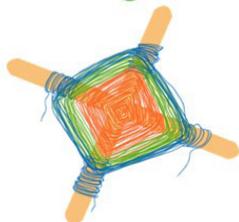
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This  
is our  
prayer



## Virtual Vacation Bible School

Are you looking for a great way for your child to participate in Vacation Bible School this summer? The Oklahoma Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is excited to announce an intergenerational virtual VBS program!

Created by Oklahoma Disciples, including Harvard Ave Children's Pastor Darlene Martinez and Children's Music Director Ashley Pease, this free four (4) day virtual VBS is self-guided and **available to use through August 15**. Family and participant bags are available to pick up at the church west entry during office hours.

Visit [www.okdisciples.org](http://www.okdisciples.org) for more information and to register your family.

Next Newsletter - August 5  
Visit us at [www.hacctulsa.org](http://www.hacctulsa.org)

Office Hours: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday; closed Friday (918) 742-5509