

July 29, 2020

Dear St. John Family,

The St. John Health and Safety Task Force for Reopening met by internet video-conferencing (Zoom) Tuesday evening. The Task Force has met periodically since early May to monitor the progress of the local area response to the Covid Pandemic. We have the benefit of the connections of the members of the task force who are in the medical community, Nesbit Dasher, Michael Young and Mary Ann Scaper, with information on statistics on local infection rates and experience from the frontlines. In addition to present-time information from these members, we are attentive to the guidance provided by North Georgia United Methodist Conference (Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson) and other churches who are facing the same decision-making process. The Task Force has begun planning for the reopening of St. John in a prudent, rational manner when conditions permit.

It is the unanimous conclusion of the Task Force that the Sanctuary and Greene Street Campus should not reopen until the local rates of infection are low enough to not jeopardize our congregation, which contains many who are in the vulnerable categories.

Through the pandemic, we are continuing our ministries by livestreaming our Sunday Morning worship services, our social media outreach, and online, interactive fellowship and studies. Our Lake Ministry, which is out of doors and allows broad social distancing, has continued as usual during the summer. Where conditions permit, our members are continuing their outreach ministries to the local community through food and clothing distribution. Our Church Office continues to be a communications center for the congregation and staff, as well as continuing the administrative activities.

The Task Force is planning for the phased reopening of the downtown, Greene St. campus as soon as we can safely do so. Our plan draws heavily from that developed by Kennesaw UMC, which is similar to the plans of several other churches. The phased reopening is described in the attached outline.

We all remain prayerful for an end to this pandemic and for the means to contain it. We each have an important part to play by adhering to guidelines that express our care for one another. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Please wear a mask, maintain social distance, and wash your hands frequently. We continue to encourage you to check in on one another and spread the good news of God's grace, mercy, constant love, and abiding presence. The sooner we, as a population, get the virus under control, the sooner we can reopen St. John.

Yours in Christ,

Allen Smith, Lay Leader