



A caring and affirming Christ-centered fellowship, lay-led and community focused.

December 1, 2020

Dear Church Family,

I pray all is well with you during this first week of Advent. As we prepare for the celebration of Christ's first coming, and prepare for Christ's second coming, I want to thank you for being church. Throughout all this craziness, uncertainty, and continuous changing of plans, you have remained faithful to God, the Kingdom of God, and Aldersgate UMC. I continue being thankful for all of that and for your love, prayers, and patience.

The November 10, 2020 letter noted that Church Council had voted to return to in-person worship on December 6, 2020, but that decision was subject to change based on guidance from Bishop Leeland, Governor Cooper, and the CDC. As you know, Governor Cooper has developed a county alert system that color codes counties based on three criteria: number of cases over the past two weeks, positivity rate for testing, and impact on hospitals. The last official data lists Cleveland County as an "orange" county meaning we have "substantial community spread." Bishop Leeland urged all pastors and church leaders to "use the NCDHHS COVID-19 Alert system to monitor their county and to reconsider their decision to hold indoor worship, particularly if their county is 'red.'" Bishop Leeland continued, "All local churches are asked to use extreme caution in response to the recent spread of the virus."

Aldersgate UMC's Church Council has decided to postpone in-person worship. Here is the statement from Church Council: *On October 26, Church Council voted to resume in-person worship on December 6 subject to changes in guidance from Bishop Leland, Governor Cooper, and the CDC. On November 17, Church Council convened to consider how recent changes in guidance from those sources impacted our plan to resume in-person worship on December 6. The collective guidance implored that we reconsider our re-opening plans near term. Council discussion and resulting vote was to postpone in-person worship until we have more positive guidance from the Bishop, Governor Cooper, and the CDC. Council elected not to set a new date at this time. Aldersgate has a broad, robust plan for managing in-person worship when the time is right. That plan is dependent on having sustainable support from the congregation. If you have not yet volunteered to serve on the Hospitality Team, please consider your support. This was not an easy decision for our church leadership. It was bathed in prayer, relied on science and rising numbers, rooted in our faith in God, and based on God-given wisdom and discernment.*

We will continue offering online worship (Facebook and You Tube), small group discipleship opportunities, and confirmation class. We also plan to offer an outside Christmas Eve service. As always, our church leadership and our staff greatly appreciate your prayers and patience.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Randy

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