

# **Hello Hopeland Members, Attenders, and Guests!**

## UPDATE – AUGUST 28<sup>th</sup> 2020

Hello everyone! Hopeland's Church Council met on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to discuss the reception of our current two worship services and the format. After a good discussion, the members of Church Council (myself included) feel it is important that we have a path and method that allows all those coming to worship God feel fulfilled in worship. This COVID-19 pandemic has not been easy.

There will be changes to the worship service starting on **Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>**, that will hopefully be a compromise that allows everyone to worship in ways that are meaningful for our spiritual growth.

We will continue the two-service format, so please be aware of your level of need and comfort when considering the components of each service.

### 9:00 AM SERVICE

**For anyone who may be in the more at-risk categories of COVID-19, our 9:00 AM service will go largely unchanged and will continue as it has over these last six weeks.**

For our members and guests that maintained extra distance during this time, the service involves a more contemplative format: there has been no singing (except for the occasional humming), and the pastor preaching that week (Russ or I) largely run-point through the service with liturgy and prayers. There also has not been a time to share our prayer concerns.

The only changes that we are actively encouraging to this worship service will be the reintroduction of acolytes and liturgists because their roles are limited (though very important), and their roles keep them more than the recommended six-feet from other attenders.

These additional roles are dependent on volunteer participation, so parts may change from week to week.

### 10:30 AM SERVICE

**The 10:30 AM service will begin to reintroduce more active participation in elements of worship, most notably, the singing of hymns and the sharing of prayer concerns from our seats.**

There is a hope that liturgists, acolytes, and even a form of Children's Church can be reintroduced as our volunteer base allows. This service will also begin to add other aspects on a more regular basis, in consultation, discussion, prayer, and vote with Church Council.

**Now comes the inevitable question of masks.** I don't think any of us would imagine they would be in a situation where requirements mask-wearing in church would be a recommendation. Hopeland is not an isolated chapel, and therefore mask-wearing during our worship should firstly be a matter of hospitality to other visitors and guests that may come and visit on Sunday. However, hospitality is not the only consideration in worship. We must continue to show grace to others who come worship the Lord with us, and at the same time, show compassion, patience, and prayer for everyone around us when we worship.

**In practical terms, this means that while worshipping and singing with masks is encouraged, you may be near your fellow brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ who are not wearing masks. Our worship is conducted with a spirit that considers the words of St. Paul in Romans 14, and I encourage everyone to study this passage. If you are uncomfortable with the possibility of being in contact with someone who is not wearing a mask during worship, I encourage you to attend either the 9:00 AM service or worship in your car with the radio.**

However, I want to strongly stress we observe mask-wearing inside the building and as we move to and from our seats in the Sanctuary, as the hallways, stairwells, elevators, and bathrooms are areas separate from the Sanctuary and the formal experience of worship.

### RADIO WORSHIP

Our church will broadcast both worship services to our parking lot on **88.9 FM**. This is not changing, so worship in our cars will continue to be available.

### ONLINE SERVICES

When possible, a video sermon will go live on Facebook and our church website at **11 AM** on Sunday. If video ahead of time isn't possible, an audio recording of the message will go up as soon as possible after worship on Sunday morning. This is also dependent on the cooperation of technology, so please forgive us if technology decides not to cooperate with us.

### WORSHIP GUIDELINES FOR BOTH SERVICES

While we are taking as many precautions as we reasonably can to keep worship here in the Sanctuary as safe as possible, our worship to God cannot be compromised simply for a desire

for our safety. I want to remind you of Proverbs 27:1 – "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."

In other words, we cannot control every scenario – that's God's prerogative, not ours. As a result, coming to worship means (as it does on any Sunday) that you're taking responsibility for yourself. The Pastor, the Church Council, or anyone else for that matter cannot make you any guarantee that you will not come into contact with COVID-19 while here.

Below are guidelines common for services during Sunday morning worship. Please read these guidelines, as they affect the flow of worship and hopefully will bring everyone on the same page when we do meet on Sundays.

- 1. Regardless of which service you are attending, you must be in a spirit of active prayer for the other service.** Remember that we all desire to deepen our relationship with God, by the worship of Jesus Christ, through the participation of the Holy Spirit. Remember that whatever service you are not attending will also be praying for you.
2. This hopefully goes without saying, but I will say it anyway for the sake of being thorough: **if you are sick, please, please stay home.** Your church family here at Hopeland will pray for you during the worship service, and once you're healed up, we will still be here.
- 3. While our 10:30 AM service may begin to offer some separate ability for children's worship during the service, unfortunately, nursery and Sunday School will remain closed.** This is something we are constantly evaluating.
- 4. Members of Hopeland Church should expect to wear masks for our worship services (except for those who are prohibited by medical conditions).** As members of our church, part of our vows involve taking personal responsibility for the worship service at Hopeland, and this is one of the ways we can show hospitality for everyone who comes in through the doors. This also shouldn't be anything out of the ordinary for us at this point, since masks have been part of our daily lives for some time now.
- 5. There will be a limited number of masks available for use if you do not have a mask.**
- 6. There will be hand sanitizer available at the front doors and outside of the Sanctuary.** Please make use of them when coming and going, for your own sake, and for those who might be in the building after you.
- 7. Every other (or more) pews will be closed to follow physical distancing guidelines suggested by the CDC (which is 6 feet).** Please respect the distance. Families that are currently in frequent contact should, of course, respect others gathered, but may, of course, sit with each other.
- 8. The Offering will not be taken as part of the worship service to avoid contact.** There will be a place to drop off your Offering at the entrance to the Sanctuary, and the

Offering that is given each week will be spiritually lifted in prayer during our time of prayer together in worship. *Also, as a reminder, if you have been saving your tithes for when we returned to worship together, this is the time to bring them.*

9. **Communion Sunday will be observed differently.** I'm encouraging families to bring their bread and juice/water from home. However, there are a limited amount of individually wrapped, disposable fellowship cups on the table in the gathering space that have a wafer and juice in them.
10. **The order of worship itself will be different, as we will be making sure that the service ends early enough to give transitional time between the two services.** It may be that your favorite parts of the worship experience feel missing. Just remember that this isn't forever – as more restrictions lift, more pieces of worship will return to the service.
11. **Things may change from week to week.** The worship service is always a changing expression of love for God. Because the information on the ground changes from the standpoint of the United Methodist Conference, the Governor, and other sources, it means that Pastor Russ or I may make changes on the fly depending on the week, and will do our best to communicate those changes to you. So, please keep an eye on your email inbox as well as our Facebook page and our website. And, don't hesitate to call.

You may have questions concerning the service, and I am available to answer any that you have. But, you are always welcome to contact me by email at [paul@methodistpastor.com](mailto:paul@methodistpastor.com) and we can discuss questions and concerns you may have.

Please remember to pray for Hopeland Church as we worship together, and remember that others are also in prayer for you.

God Bless,

Pastor Paul