

## *Nancy's Notes*

Greetings,

Since Governor Holcomb shared his plan for opening up the state last Friday I have been asked if we are coming back to the sanctuary now. The church board will be addressing that question at our Monday, May 11th meeting; we will be following the guidelines of Bishop Trimble which you will find below. There are no simple answers to the questions of when. However, I will share this with you. We will strive our best to follow the first of John Wesley's Rules for Living- Do No Harm. Just because something is allowable it does not make it prudent!

No one wants to be back in the sanctuary for in person worship more than I do. No one wants to see our kids running in and out of the building, hear our choirs practice and sing, and spend time chatting with one another during our gathering time between services more than I do. But we must wait until it is safe. Remember, we are not motivated by a spirit of fear but by trust, hope, and faith that God is leading us through this.

Pastor Nancy

## From Bishop Trimble...

Dear Beloved Friends and Members of The United Methodist Family,

Thank you for your faithful witness, prayers and patience as we continue to embrace social distancing and spiritual connection with an abundance of caution. In his briefing on Friday, May 1, Governor Holcomb shared his guidance for how Indiana could get "back on track" in the weeks ahead. The Governor took great care to emphasize that his plan represents a "measured" path with five stages to exercise caution and wisdom along the road to what some may consider a new normal.

The Governor has deferred to churches and leaders of churches to use wise judgement on best ways to resume gathering for worship and ministry in the weeks ahead. The state plan lists specific guidance for churches which can be found at [www.backontrack.in.gov](http://www.backontrack.in.gov).

What about our work and worship as United Methodists in Indiana? In a recent communication, as your Bishop I asked United Methodist churches not to plan to meet before May 17. We believe it is still wise to plan "in person" worship no sooner than June 14. Further, in concert with the state's guidance regarding protecting those among us who may be more vulnerable, 65 and older or those with health concerns, all congregations are encouraged to consider gathering plans that are more conservative than the ones allowed in stages 2-5 of the state plan.

The Governor's guidance specifically recommends that churches continue to conduct as many activities as possible remotely. We are already doing livestream, virtual, drive in, and recorded services. We believe this is good ministry that can be missional, and we celebrate the efforts that have resulted in reaching our members and new people as well.

We do not believe it is prudent or necessary for the United Methodist churches in Indiana to recommend a “one size fits all” protocol for churches that are in different community contexts, have different membership, or have already been planning a process for return. Each setting will require discernment of its own. And, in fact, congregations with clergy who are themselves in the “vulnerable group” are asked to take that into consideration in their planning.

Here is what I know for sure:

We have provided resources here that include a guide to consider as you plan to return to worship and in-building activities. Please communicate with your Conference Superintendent your plans and questions. We will continue to make recommendations and decisions based first on our General Rules as United Methodists, the first being to “Do no harm.”

We believe no one should feel compelled to attend worship who does not feel safe or that they may be at higher risk for becoming sick.

We know that persons can be asymptomatic and yet have COVID-19 and spread it to others. We know that at this time there is no vaccine or cure. We do know that wearing a mask, washing hands and practicing disciplined social distancing has prevented more people from becoming ill.

The easing of government restrictions should not be equated with assurance that our public gatherings are safe. It is incumbent upon our local churches to make wise choices about how to manage coming back into the church space. We are no longer living in a time where we can go back to the way it used to be. We are now responsible for the well-being of ourselves and those with whom we will come in contact.

As clergy, you have been called to be shepherds—with the laity—of the flocks of Jesus followers with whom He has entrusted you. One shepherd penned Psalm 23, which is rich with honesty and assurance. “Even though I (We) walk through the darkest valley, we fear no evil for God is with us” (Psalm 23:4).

We do not know how long this pandemic will last, but we must not forget the word “through.” We will go through this valley together, with each other and the One who has said to His disciples, “I am the Good Shepherd.”

Please know that the Bishop and Extended Cabinet are praying for all of our pastors and congregations and ministry partners. You will be learning very soon about the ways we have been working diligently to provide a worship resource that can serve as a respite for our clergy on an upcoming Sunday morning.

As Easter People, we share the message of hope and the incarnational love of Jesus Christ with all the people we can, in all the ways we can in the days ahead. Be encouraged as we go through this valley together.

Bishop Julius C. Trimble

Resident Bishop

Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church

## Home Bound

During this unique day in which we live we are doing things a little differently. Many people are doing things virtually, like attending meetings, but the church members are still preparing holiday gifts for our Home bound.

Easter chicks were created by members of Ruth Circle and also delivered by their members.

Mother's Day is coming up and this is the picture of the beautiful bouquets designed by Annie Trout. It was a team effort, flowers given by a member of Ruth Circle, designed by Annie and delivered by members of Ruth Circle. What lady doesn't enjoy a rose? Happy Mother's Day

Thanks so much to the circle members for thinking of others. Many individuals have birthdays coming up and we do want to honor them in some way. However, we might not know the dates of our members' birthdays.

If you do know of someone's birthday -especially someone who may live alone - please notify me or the church. Also if you would like to be a birthday party celebrator - just let me know. All ages can be involved. The more helpers the better.

Sometimes people like to cruise by especially if they have unique cars, well we could drive by the birthday person's house.

Please let me know by calling my cell phone at: 219-363-0103, or email me at: [judycommers@gmail.com](mailto:judycommers@gmail.com)

Happy Mother's Day to all the lovely ladies in our church. Sincerely Judy Commers



## **2020 Higher Education Scholarships**

Ten scholarships are offered to 1st UMC members entering or returning to an accredited college or trade school, regardless of age. Five awards are also open to community members. Scholarship amounts range from \$200 to \$800. All awards are listed on a single application form. You may apply for multiple awards. Please note eligibility requirements.

You may request an application by contacting Higher Education Committee Chair Sue Cassler at [susan.cassler@comcast.net](mailto:susan.cassler@comcast.net), or by e-mailing [firstunitedmethodistchurchmc@gmail.com](mailto:firstunitedmethodistchurchmc@gmail.com). Application forms are also available on the church website: [mcindianaumc.org](http://mcindianaumc.org).

Send completed application forms to Sue Cassler at 4928 W. Schultz Rd., La Porte, IN 46350, or via e-mail (address above). Applications are to be received no later than Thursday, May 28th.

## **Sponsor A Higher Education Scholarships**

If you wish to co-sponsor a scholarship, perhaps as a memorial or in honor of someone, donations in any amount are welcome. One-time electronic donations can be made through the church website: [mcindianaumc.org](http://mcindianaumc.org). Click "Online Giving" on the Home Page menu and locate the button labelled "Higher Education". If you prefer, you may send a check to the church, payable to First United Methodist Church. Be sure to write "Scholarship Fund" on the memo line of your check. Your generosity and support of this ministry are sincerely appreciated!

--The Higher Education Committee:

Sue Cassler, Chair; Jon Bausback, Judy Commers, Dottie Evett, Nancy Kahn, Melissa Morse, & Linda Peo

The Local TV Station channel 99 shows our church service Wednesday's at 2:30 pm , Friday's at 4:30 pm, & Sunday's at 7 pm