



# Manchester

United Methodist Church

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Dearest friends,

We continue to live in an unusual time of fluctuation as the COVID-19 pandemic persists with cases rising rapidly across the state ([Michigan dashboard](#)) while we are also yet learning how to adopt safety measures that allow us to resume some activities with a semblance of normalcy. As the legal ruling around the governor's statewide orders has shifted in recent weeks, your church leadership has paid careful attention to the ongoing situation to ensure that we are doing our part as responsible citizens to limit the spread of the virus and protect our shared health. From the onset of the pandemic, we have considered it our responsibility to love our neighbor by following the most recent public health guidelines.

In recent days, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services as well as the Washtenaw County Health Department have issued new guidelines that have increased the meeting capacity of non-residential facilities to 20 individuals per 1,000 square feet in rooms with flexible seating and 20% of the seating capacity in rooms with fixed seating. Considering the size of fellowship hall and the seating capacity of the sanctuary, **we are increasing the attendance limit in both spaces to 40 individuals**. While our indicator for resuming in-person worship has been a move to phase five which has not yet occurred, the increased 40-person limit has opened us to the possibility of resuming sooner while still adhering to the [previously shared guidelines](#) requiring masks, social distancing, and other worship adaptations.

However, our current internet connection at the church building does not allow for reliable streaming from the sanctuary and we have instead been recording worship earlier to then be streamed off-site. While we have begun the process of increasing our connection speeds by changing internet providers, the transition requires the installation of new underground cables and may not be completed for another two months. This means that we cannot worship in-person and online simultaneously. While we hold both worship in-person and online in equal priority, this technical difficulty will require us to adjust the schedule of one or the other.

**To help us understand the impact of adjusting the schedule of either in-person or online worship away from 10:30am on Sunday morning for the immediate future, [please complete this survey](#).** We would appreciate your responses by Friday, October 30. If we are to resume in-person worship or otherwise adjust the worship schedule, the earliest I anticipate this taking place would be November 15. I will share updates as decisions are made.

Thank you for your grace as we continue working to protect the health of our community. We do not live in fear; as Psalm 91 encourages us, *"Don't be afraid of ... sickness that prowls in the dark"* (Ps. 91:5-6). Yet neither do we live recklessly; when Satan quoted the very same psalm inviting Jesus to carelessly put his life at risk, Jesus rebuked him and said, *"Don't test the Lord your God"* (Luke 4:12). As your pastor, appointed by the Bishop to faithfully serve the body of Christ and charged with the responsibility to lead and oversee worship, I recognize my duty to distinguish between courage and carelessness while leading us forward and covet your prayers along the way.

In Christ,

Pastor Dillon