



Manchester

United Methodist Church

Dearest friends,

With the continuing increase of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations around the state, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) issued [new direction](#) earlier this week targeting indoor social gatherings and other group activities. In our continued commitment to following health guidelines to protect our shared health, we have reviewed these new guidelines and a related request by the Michigan Bishop, and are adapting the church's COVID-19 response accordingly.

First, we are making two relatively minor changes to our in-person building precautions that will take effect tomorrow at the same time as the MDHHS orders:

1. **Office Hours:** regular office hours are suspended, and the office will be open by appointment instead. This will allow us to limit physical contact while continuing all office work. To make an appointment, contact the church office at 734-428-8495 or office@manchesterumchurch.org.
2. **Attendance Limits:** the maximum attendance limit in both the fellowship hall and sanctuary is again set to 10 individuals. This will allow the most essential ministries that require in-person attendance to continue while transitioning all other activities to online venues to assist with curbing community spread.

Secondly, Bishop Bard of the Michigan Conference has appealed to all Michigan United Methodist churches to refrain from in-person indoor worship for the Advent and Christmas seasons ([read the whole letter here](#)). I intend to honor his request and am thankful that, in adhering to prudent health precautions by continuing to prioritize online and at-home worship options, our current worship practices will remain unaffected. However, this will delay the start of our in-person Morning Prayer service and impact our Christmas Eve service options. Even while trusting in the clear necessity of such action, it is not an easy decision and I do grieve the loss of our familiar Christmas practices.

Yet we might remember the Christmas story tells about a God who is born in a stable because there wasn't a place for Mary and Joseph in the inn, where they would have liked to be. Jesus spent his first night asleep in a manger because it was there. This year as some two thousand years ago, we will go where circumstances lead, we will use what we have, and God will surely arrive again in our midst.

I am meeting with the worship committee later this week and look forward to leaning into the realities of the coming season with creativity and enthusiasm. In whatever form it takes, we will celebrate the good news of great joy that comes in the birth of the Christ child! I anticipate sharing details about our Christmas Eve services soon.

I am blessed to be in ministry with you all.

In Christ,
Pastor Dillon