

## **Pastoral Statement from the Session of Faith Presbyterian Church (May 13, 2020)**

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1).

So begins the account of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in the book of Acts. As we approach the day of Pentecost in the year 2020 (May 31), we understand that it will not be possible for the members of our congregation to be “all together in one place” this year. We will be invited, as normal, to wear red in celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit! While some restrictions are being lifted in some places and for some people, the ongoing threat of the Covid-19 global pandemic will require that we consider any return to in-person activities in the life of the church in a way that is measured and mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable among us, which, given our demographics, is almost our entire congregation. The possibility of safely gathering again, for a community such as ours, will emerge only slowly, and any return to gathering will be necessarily cautious and gradual in phases. A time may come when some may feel they could attend public worship in person, while many of us, out of an abundance of caution, and having concern for our own and other’s health, will need and wish to continue to worship at and from home. How we balance these needs, hopes and expectations will ask a lot of all of us. The Session affirms its intention to continue to offer ways for people to participate in the weekly Service of Worship online.

We give thanks for the promise of our faith—that the Lord God will bless and keep us, the risen Christ is with us, and the Holy Spirit connects us with believers near and far. We take comfort and inspiration from the example of the earliest believers, who “spent much time together in the temple” *and* “broke bread at home ... with glad and generous hearts” (Acts 2:46). As we anxiously track the news in these times—with numbers of new cases, numbers of persons who have died, and numbers of those who are recovering—we remember the good news of the gospel: “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

The Session of Faith Presbyterian Church has been meeting and will continue to meet weekly to continue our careful process of discussion and discernment, with an abundance of caution and concern for those who are most vulnerable, upon consideration of the best scientific knowledge at our disposal. We know we must identify and understand the many risks that arise from what until recently we thought of as “normal church activities”. We will carry forward all this vital work in the spirit of constant prayer, and with full trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. We ask for and need your prayers for this work and in support of the ongoing mission of the congregation in service to God and all our neighbors. As we continue forward together the Session encourages everyone to access helpful and important information found on the new webpage [Bearing witness covid19](#). The Session will continue to update the congregation.

We may make mistakes along the way. There will surely be awkward moments, as in time, we adjust to new protocols and practices. There have been, are and will be times of frustration, disappointment, and grief. We will have countless opportunities to exercise the spiritual gifts of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. But there will also be blessings. There will be wonderful surprises, great celebrations, and moments of deep satisfaction. We will get to see glimpses of the new thing God is doing, even now. We will have opportunities to savor the spiritual gifts of love, joy, peace, generosity, and faithfulness.

Let us be faithful, then—to God and to one another—as we receive the gifts and work through the challenges of this time in the life of our congregation and world. Let us be guided by the Word, responsive to the Spirit, and open to the grace of God. Let us remember that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus.