



Dear First UMC Arlington family,

I am sure that many of you have read or watched Gov. Abbott's remarks about re-opening Texas after the stay-at-home order that has been in effect for the last several weeks. I am also certain that this news impacts many people in very different ways. For some, they are so thankful to be able to return to work, because they are truly struggling to make ends meet. Still others are afraid and have valid concerns about health and well-being for themselves and the many vulnerable communities around us all. Yet in all of these emotions, feelings, and beliefs the one thing we know is that God is with us and we are not alone.

As of May 1st, many businesses will be able to reopen if they ensure no more than 25% capacity and comply with social distancing guidelines in all areas. In addition, the Governor stated that we must double our efforts to protect our beloved population of those 65 and older who are at greater risk than the younger members of population. In the days to come, our lay leaders, staff, and church council will all be having conversations about when we might be able to reopen church activities in a safe way that values our desire to be back together, and an awareness that we have a church population with many people who are vulnerable.

No matter what those decisions might be, I am certain of a few things:

1. We will continue online only worship for at least the next few weeks to ensure a safety plan that can comply with all of the precautions the medical team working with the Governor have required.
2. When we resume some in-person activities, we will have to phase those activities in over time to ensure we never have too many people in the building at one time and that the building can be properly cleaned and sanitized as we resume in-person ministries.
3. There are some learnings from this time that we do not want to lose. In many ways, we are currently connecting with people that we have never connected with before through online worship and Zoom small groups and we do not want to lose touch with these vital new connections simply by going back to things the way we have always done them before.
4. The most important part of this all, God is with us, we are not alone. God has been doing amazing things in and through our church the last several weeks, but that should come as no surprise as God has been doing amazing things through First UMC Arlington for generations! I am so thankful for all of you that are a part of God's family here, and look forward to the bright future that God has for us together.

Early next week, I will send a video update to the congregation via email, social media, and our website with more information about next steps and best practices for us as a congregation. I am so thankful for all of your love, support, and selflessness in this process as we learn and grow into God's hopeful future together.

God bless and keep,
Pastor Chris