



HANOVER STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1801 N. JEFFERSON STREET
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19802

THE REV. ANDY JACOB, PASTOR

Phone: (302) 658-5114
E-mail:
office@hanoverchurch.org
pastor@hanoverchurch.org

May 14, 2021

Dear Hanover Saints,

For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

So the Apostle Paul wrote in a letter to the saints in Philippi while he was separated from them. One can only imagine how sweet the reunion when Paul returned to the communities of faith that he had planted.

I've been feeling a little like Paul lately. For 429 days I have longed to write this letter. The time for our reunion has come. We are preparing to begin gathering again in person, in worship, and in our sanctuary. The day is coming when the power of the coronavirus to separate us will be defeated.

Before writing a word about the details, let me offer what have been, and will remain, our two guiding principles...

First, even as we come together in person, we will continue to strictly adhere to all the precautionary guidelines related to Covid-19. We have come too far to be set back now. And, most important, the health and well-being of all who enter our church home is, and will remain, our top priority. If, for any reason, the pandemic trends reverse or the risk becomes greater, our plans will be adjusted accordingly.

Second, and equally important: the decision to begin meeting in person for worship does not come with any assumptions, expectations, or mandates - and certainly with no judgments. Whether to attend in person is a personal choice. Please hear this: for anyone who is not comfortable gathering in person there is nothing but understanding, support, and the deepest respect for that decision. Each of us must return in the time and manner this is right for us.

Now, on to the details!

Fox Point State Park
Sunday, June 13, 10:00 a.m.

Our first in-person worship will be at the Annual Outdoor Worship Service and Picnic. The Dixie Ramblers are slated to continue their streak of providing music for our reunion celebration.

- Please bring your own prepared food and drink – there won't be a potluck or grilled food this year.
- Given how quickly the CDC guidelines are changing, decisions about mask wearing and social distancing will be announced closer to the event.

- You're encouraged to bring lawn chairs as it will make social distancing easier if we can spread out beyond the tables under the shelter.

In the coming weeks, continue to watch The Flash and The Herald for more details.

Worship in the Sanctuary Sunday, June 20, 10:00 a.m.

For all who are comfortable attending in person, here is what you can expect:

- Decisions about mask wearing and social distancing will be announced closer to that date.
- A table will be set up in the back of the sanctuary with masks, hand sanitizer, hearing devices, and a box to receive offerings as you leave the service.
- We will not be using bulletins, name tags, hymnals, Bibles, or hand-held microphones.
- We will not sing hymns as a body, but rest assured, music will be a part of the experience!
- Following the service there will be a time of fellowship outside where tables will be set up along the Baynard Boulevard side of the building. Should the weather not cooperate, we will commune in the Gathering Place. Pre-packaged treats will be available, and you are also welcome to bring your own.

Live Streaming Worship Services

For those unable to attend in-person worship, we share the news that, as planned, we will begin live-streaming our worship services each Sunday at 10:00 a.m., beginning on June 20. Considerable time, energy, and funds have been expended to provide a way for those not ready to return in person to take part in worshipping our God. More information will be coming about how it will work, but if you have been able to access our pre-recorded services on YouTube, you are all ready to go. Recognizing that it is not the same as being in the sanctuary, let us praise God for the mysteries of cyberspace that will bring us together in real time.

And one more piece of news...

During the pandemic, the pre-recorded services and most of the messages were recorded in various locations in and around our community. Often they included adaptations and interpretations of Biblical stories in the effort to help us better understand our faith in the "real" world – our world. Throughout the pandemic the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Given that, and after much discussion, the Session recently approved the Worship Committee's recommendation to install two projection screens in the sanctuary. When we return for in-person worship we will have the capacity to continue sharing messages from out in the world. Messages delivered in our sanctuary will no longer be just for our ears – they will be a fuller experience that includes visual images that illustrate the content of the message.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me, any of the Elders, or Worship Committee members so that you might have them heard. Rest assured, there have been many lengthy

discussions about how this new resource will be used – and our journey with this gift will be fluid and flexible as we learn how to use it most effectively. There are many more conversations yet to come – and I look forward to adding each of your voices to the discussion.

For the 429 days that I've been longing to write this letter there has been so much doubt and uncertainty. Through it all, however, two facts have been clear and consistent. First, that post-pandemic life will be different than the one we knew before the virus came to our shores. It cannot be otherwise. We are a changed people for having gone through this time of disease and dis-ease.

Second, taking from Paul's letter to the people in Rome: *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, - nor a pandemic - nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

May God bless our efforts to use the lessons we have learned in isolation to make the changes that draw us closer to God and one another. And, together, may we find...

Peace,

Andy

