



Pleasant Retreat United Methodist Church
852 County Rd 458
P.O. Box 207
Thorndale, TX 76577

November 17, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On November 9, 2020 at our monthly Administrative Council meeting, the council decided to move back to one, indoor Sunday morning worship service. **Beginning Sunday, November 29, 2020, we will return to one worship service in the Fellowship Hall, beginning at 10:30am.**

We made this decision because we realize that a time will come soon when we are no longer able to meet outside due to the winter weather. November 29th is the first Sunday of Advent, and we are excited to enter back into our building to the warmth and familiarity of Advent and Christmas decorations.

Here are some general things you should know about this worship service:

- If you do not feel well (fever, cough, etc) or have been knowingly exposed to someone confirmed to have COVID-19, we ask you to please stay home.
- If you are a part of the at-risk population (65+ years of age, auto-immune or respiratory disorders, etc) then we encourage you to stay home and join us virtually.
- Masks will be required and can be provided at the door for persons 10 years and older and for people who do not have “a medical or disability that prevents wearing a face covering.”
- The chairs will be arranged to provide social distance between sitting congregants. Masks are especially important as we enter, exit, and move around the worship space as necessary.
- ***We will stream the service through the teleconferencing service Zoom. This means (with the private link and password) you can join us securely and virtually from home –or- if you do not have internet, you can call in and listen as if it were on the radio!*** Further details will be distributed as November 29th approaches.
- If you are a family with young children, we will make special accommodation for you to worship with us that are safe for you and everyone else. Please get in touch with Pastor Mark.
- **Sunday school will move to the back room of the sanctuary building** so that the Fellowship Hall can remain prepared for occupation on Sunday mornings **and will go from 9:15-10:15pm**

Here is a quick picture of what the service will look like when you arrive:

Entering the sanctuary

- Please do not arrive too early. Socializing is encouraged *after* the service (outside), but is discouraged before the service inside.
- You will need to enter through the front door of the fellowship hall.

- Upon entering, please ensure that your hands are clean, and masks will be available if you need one.
- An usher will seat you when you arrive. In order to maximize safety, capacity, and flexibility, for everyone, you will need to sit where the usher directs you. ***Please do not seat yourself.*** On any given row, there will need to be a minimum of three seats between persons of different households to maintain social distance.
- Please refrain from handshakes, hugs, elbow bumps, and other physical contact with anyone, especially those who have not invited it.

During the service

- Please come prepared to remain seated once you sit down. The service will be 45-50 minutes. The bathrooms will be open, but please avoid their use. Avoid moving around the hall once seated. ***These are two of the most important steps we can take to keep the risk of meeting comfortably low.***

Exiting the sanctuary

- *Before the conclusion of the service*, your row will be released by an usher to exit through the door closest to the sanctuary.
- You're invited to drop your offering in the offering plate upon exiting through the east door.
- We will pass the peace, sing our sending song, and receive the benediction outside (weather permitting).
- Everyone is invited to chat outside *after* the service.

It is my expectation that by God's grace these precautions will help connect us, whether in person or virtually, as the body of Christ and will help keep us safe. As you reflect on these precautions, remember the great commandments – to love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). As Christians, before our own desires we ought to desire what is best according to God and what is best for the sake of others. These precautions reflect such desire and following them during this season of life is an easy, simple way to love your neighbors well.

One more thing – we will soon be beginning a church-wide study using a daily devotional Advent reading book called **The Advent Mission**. I'm excited to dig into the ways we can be missionally-focused and kingdom-minded together as a church. The books will be available beginning this Sunday November 22 and we will begin the study in correlation with Advent on November 29th. In addition to receiving and using the book, I will be preaching a related sermon series and we will begin a study group to reflect on what we are learning. This group will be in-person and also on Zoom. Please let me know if I need to deliver or mail a book to you. You will not want to miss out on this opportunity!

All of this being said, you can see that November 29th will be a big Sunday for us and I look forward to the way God will move in and through us that day! I trust you will be in prayer for me and for our church from now until then.

As always, if you have questions, concerns, or comments please reach out to me.

Many blessings,

Pastor Mark

