



2540 Center Street
Bethlehem, PA 18017
610-865-5715

July 3, 2020

Dear Church Family:

Last week, when we gathered in our parking lot for our socially-distant 25th Anniversary service, I shared these words of prayer as part of our communion liturgy:

How our hearts yearn to come before You together in Your sanctuary.

Our choir desires to sing Your praises,

our ensemble, to lead Your people in songs of praise,

our bells, to ring out songs of joy,

our people, to sing of your great love.

We long for the day when we might once again gather in Your sanctuary,

embrace Your people, and pass Your peace.

Like so many of you, I long for that day! As our county now moves into the “green” phase of Pennsylvania’s reopening plan, many of you have asked me when that day will come, when we’ll gather together for in-person worship.

For the past several weeks, our Wesley Church Reopening Team has been meeting via Zoom to determine the necessary steps for “reopening” Wesley Church. These faithful servants have taken this work very seriously, and I am grateful for their efforts! Members of the team have researched conference and public health guidelines, reviewed the data from our recent church-wide survey, ordered necessary supplies, and debated various options for reopening. In our conversations, we compared the task of reopening not to a light switch (with a simple “on/off,” all-or-nothing approach), but rather to a dimmer switch (which would allow for gradual degrees of “openness,” which could be adjusted in light of the ever-changing situation in our area).

Above all, our Reopening Team’s top priority has been your safety. With that priority in mind, the team has determined the following timeline for a return to in-person worship at Wesley Church:

- Throughout the month of July, we will continue with online-only worship at 10:00 AM.
- On Sunday, August 2, we will begin the initial “volunteer phase” of our reopening plan. At that time, our in-person congregation will consist of those individuals who volunteer to serve as ushers, greeters, temperature screeners, and sanitation volunteers. (If you would like to serve on one of these teams, please contact me via email: pastorcandy@wesleychurch.com.) Those

who are not part of one of these volunteer teams should plan to continue worshipping at home via Facebook Live or the church website.

- After a few weeks (with a date to be determined in light of updated public health information -- this is, after all, an ever-changing situation!), we will continue into the “RSVP phase” of the reopening. At this time, members of our wider Wesley congregation will be able to participate in in-person worship, but must RSVP ahead of time via online signups. (For those who do not have access to online resources, we will have an opportunity for RSVP by phone.) This will enable us to manage our attendance and ensure social distancing. Those who arrive for worship but did not RSVP will be directed to an overflow area in our fellowship hall. More information on the details of the RSVP process will be provided to you in coming weeks.
- Whether in the initial “volunteer phase” or the subsequent “RSVP phase” of reopening, **all those who come to the church for in-person worship should plan to wear a mask and maintain social distancing** for the full duration of the service. In accordance with conference recommendations, we will not have coffee hour or child care during either of these initial phases, and we will temporarily refrain from congregational singing.
- During all phases, we will continue to offer online worship via Facebook Live and our church website.

Throughout this pandemic, I am mindful that many of us have very different comfort levels with regards to going out in public. For some of you, the timeline I’ve outlined here may seem recklessly fast; for others, it may seem frustratingly slow. Please know that our Reopening Team took your feedback into great consideration when designing this plan. Also, please know that your safety is our top priority!

I look forward to the day when we can all come together for worship in our sanctuary. Yet now more than ever, I know that the church is so much more than a building. While our building may be closed, our “church” is open, as the people of Wesley Church continue to be “people blessing people.”

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Candy LaBar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Candy" being more prominent than the last name "LaBar".

Rev. Candy LaBar
Lead Pastor,
Wesley Church