



REV. JILL DUFFIELD
SENIOR PASTOR

Dear Church Family,

I write you from a tender place of deep gratitude mingled with ongoing sadness. Your love has been, and continues to be, so evident as we navigate Dolly's death, Covid's latest resurgence, a new school year fraught with anxiety, and so much more. When I allow myself to stop and take it all in, I marvel at what we've weathered already and worry about those desperately in need of relief. I also give thanks for the countless people in our midst steadfastly caring, praying, helping, and serving.

We are the Body of Christ in the world and we've no shortage of work to do in His name. God's enlisting us to participate in the present and coming kingdom of heaven, while challenging, is also an incredible gift that offers joy, purpose, and hope. I pray you feel the Spirit's powerful moving in this place as I do.

I want to update you on several things. Our stalwart Covid Task Force brought recommendations to the August Session meeting that passed unanimously; details at right. As you know, the pandemic continues. We will monitor how it develops in our community and respond accordingly.

I am pleased to share that Neil has graciously postponed his retirement until the end of February 2022. We are moving forward with plans to add a pastor to our staff at that time. The Session elected the Transition Committee to steward this process with the help of our liaison from Salem Presbytery, Larry Hooker. Those who've generously agreed to serve on the committee are David Hammer, Jean Goodman, Tim Cook, Penne Prigge, Jack Harrington, and Maddie Lowman. Please keep them in prayer as they begin their work.

We are diligently working to make sure the excellent pastoral care that Dolly led for many years continues smoothly. Our parish associates, Newton Cowan, Doug McLeroy, and Maria Hanlin are committed to doing what needs to be done, as is our Pastoral Care Committee. We will update you on leadership as soon as we are able.

As we wrestle with many challenges not of our choosing or our making, now is an opportune time to assess our priorities and core values. What really matters? What really does not matter? We've been broken open and in that breaking the light of Christ shines through, heals and leads us forward. I pray you will consider how you can continue to be connected, or reconnect, to our church family. We're asking you to boomerang back to church whether that be through participating in worship more frequently, in-person or online, joining a Bible study or small group, praying regularly for our congregation, or supporting our outreach ministries. God has called us together to share the good news of great joy for all people and many need to hear that living Word right now.

A reminder that our Fall schedule begins on Sunday, September 12. Rejoice! will be at 9 am in Mullin Life Center, Church School for all ages will be at 10 am, and traditional worship will be at 11 am in the Sanctuary as well as livestreamed. We will have our Rally Day kickoff that evening with activities (mostly outdoors!) for all ages. Be on the lookout for more details soon.

Thank you for reading this long letter. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your commitment to Christ and His church. Thank you for embodying the love of God in more ways than I can say. I am richly blessed be among you.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jill".

COVID GUIDELINES APPROVED THIS WEEK

So that we can remain open safely:

Worship

- Sanctuary service continues and Rejoice! will begin September 12, with no sign-up needed.
- Masking required
- Hand sanitizers used upon entry and exit
- Appropriate distancing maintained
- Overflow spaces available for the Sanctuary service; livestream continues
- Weddings and funerals will follow the same guidelines as worship services.

Other activities

- Church School classes and small groups may meet inside, masks required
- Masks encouraged but not required for outdoor meetings
- Food and drink permitted at outdoor gatherings
- Hot Dish & Hope continues to-go meals