

Dear Church Members and Friends,

This Sunday, May 17, 2020 we are beginning something new. We are having worship outside at 10:00 a.m. The worship team and Pastor Donna will be leading worship from the South side of the building. You can listen to worship from your car or you may use lawn chairs next to your car. Please practice social distancing and wear a mask. Do not shake hands or hug anyone that lives outside your home. The service will be cancelled if we have any heavy rain or severe weather during the 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. time. The church building will not be open. If necessary, the restroom will be available and an usher will let one person at a time in the building for restroom use. An usher will give you a worship handout and receive your offering when you enter the parking area from the Lamont St. entrance. Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes early for the service so we can begin worship promptly at 10:00.

We will continue to have online worship at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Sundays if you prefer to watch from home. Bishop Carter has advised Florida churches to not begin services in the building until after June 15. We have a tentative plan in place for relaunching worship in the church building when allowed to. Thank you for your help in our planning through completion of the surveys mailed out last week.

In the meantime, this time of waiting is also a time of grieving. The way things were prior to this pandemic may not ever fully return. And even when everything does get back to normal, we will be different. Life has those times when change happens and things are never the same as they were before. Often the change is the loss of a loved one. Life is altered and we are never the same. We grow and adapt and are shaped by life events. Some are positive changes like a marriage, a new baby, a move to a new place. Some changes are difficult like a serious illness, a death, loss of a job.

Most life changes impact us and our family and a circle of friends. Occasionally there are changes that impact a community and on rare occasions the whole world is changed. This pandemic has altered life around the world. It is harder to see our way forward with so many aspects of life outside our control. Holding onto faith and God's Word have helped humanity through the centuries and are a help to each of us as we go forward.

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Isaiah 43:18-19 are good words for us to turn to these days.*

We mourn the life we had before but trust God to make a new path for us as individuals and churches. We trust God to be with us as we worship at home, outside and in future places and ways. We are not reopening. We have not closed. We are doing new things. We are facing the future and embracing new ways even if we miss the old ways. God is with us. God is for us. See you Sunday!

In Service with and for Christ,

Pastor Donna

