

## September 2021 Minister's Board Report

Greetings Board,

As you are likely aware, we now have a new date for gathering in person: October 10<sup>th</sup>. That Sunday—and subsequent weeks for as long as needed—will consist of trial gatherings where we will work out the bumps and issues that will inevitably occur in trying to safely gather in the new space. We have limited the gathering capacity to 30 people and, as of today, we have already met and exceeded that number through the RSVP system our wonderful (truly!) new Office Administrator has set up.

In speaking with our DRE, I have repeated the ethic that has come out of the meetings with the Board and COVID Task Force: primarily, that our attempts to gather will continue to be practice or trial gatherings (rather than a “fully opened” church) until we are able to successfully and safely integrate our youngest and/or most vulnerable congregants into our plans. Thus, I’m hoping that the 30 people on site for these upcoming Sundays will help us to be able to problem solve and foresee any issues that might occur when more people are on site. It will be up to the DRE and RE Committee (when they are ready) to present a plan to the COVID Task Force that will keep our kids safe. Until then, the trial services are being limited to only those who are vaccinated. Social distancing, masking, and other protocols yet to be determined will be part of this on-site learning experience.

In preparation for our next phase as a congregation, I’ve been researching what is currently happening in faith communities of all shapes, beliefs, and sizes in this country. I came across an article on the Ministry Architects website—this one is by Rob Dyer, a Presbyterian minister. I wanted to share it with you:

*The story many are not acknowledging is that we are a traumatized people. For each and every one of us – all at once – our world stopped. And, now, every single person – from the ones present to the ones we claim to miss to the ones we don’t even know yet – everyone is recovering from a shared trauma. The events we’ve walked through have had many questioning their livelihoods, their safety, and their relationships.*

*And if the church hasn’t offered answers for those questions yet, then we need to figure out how to do so now. We need to figure out what it means to be a spiritual trauma center for our communities. We need to reintroduce ourselves as a place that can tend to the wounds this pandemic has opened. Each church needs to consider how they might evangelize to their neighbors (and some of their own members) – almost as if they were launching a new church in 2021.*

Food for thought as we begin to think about who we are in our new space in this remarkable time.

In gratitude,

Rev. Jason Cook