

Dear members and friends of The Shandon Congregational Church,

As you know all church services and activities have been cancelled since early March. At the Church Council meeting on August 13 a new tentative date of September 6 was set as our “reopening” date.

As opposed to our previous plans to hold services at the Community House we plan to hold services on September 6 in the sanctuary. We will be asking folks to wear their masks and maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or more with congregants who are not members of your family. If you do not have a mask we should have some available.

This is not the first time that our church and community have faced a significant outbreak of disease. In the 1830’s 60 lives were lost in Morgan and Ross Townships due to a Cholera epidemic, and the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 took the lives of more than 2,200 in the Cincinnati area. With the current Novel Coronavirus pandemic there have been more than 3,400 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and more than 65 confirmed deaths in Butler County as of 8/21/2020.

We understand that some still see wearing a mask as a hassle or otherwise burdensome, yet we are also continuing to see outbreaks and concentrations of the Coronavirus and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in areas where individuals are not following these guidelines when in group settings. As colleges and universities have opened recently we have seen multiple examples of campuses having to abruptly close due to students and others not following these guidelines and triggering new outbreaks in virus cases. We also continue to see outbreaks in churches and other settings across the country where people are not following the guidelines to wear masks and maintain physical distancing. For the health and safety of all we ask you to follow these guidelines.

We will have hand sanitizer on hand as you walk in the door and we are asking folks to continue to follow health department guidelines by wearing masks (a few members have been making some so we should have some available if you don’t have one) and practicing physical distancing.

The restrooms in the chapel adjacent to the sanctuary will be accessible in case of absolute necessity. We will have cleaner on hand that we will ask folks to use if they use the restrooms. This can be as simple as spraying and wiping down any surfaces touched in the restrooms including door handles, sinks and faucets, light switches, toilets, toilet handles/levers, toilet paper dispensers, and anything else that is touched. We all appreciate your cooperation with this as we work to maintain a clean and healthy environment.

As we restart Sunday worship services, we will not immediately be holding Sunday School, Children's Church, Church Nursery, communion, gospel sings, or other activities. Many churches around the country have still not reopened, and several that have already experienced their own outbreaks of the virus due to attendees not following guidelines to wear masks or maintain physical distancing. As we begin the process of restarting Sunday services again our plan is to move slowly, with worship services only, and build from there as we get a better feel for what it will be like to gather again.

When we restart services on September 6 we will have a Butler County Sheriff's Deputy present to provide security.

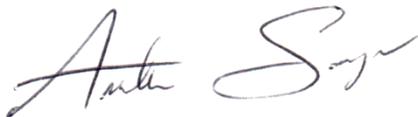
As with earlier plans, we are not exactly sure what the service will look like in terms of length, hymns, prayers, etc, but Pastor Ed and others are working on coordinating a fulfilling worship service. Pastor Ed has suggested that we should not anticipate singing hymns, saying prayers as a group, or other activities that would involve talking as a group. Pastor Ed will continue to email materials each week for folks who are not able to attend. We also hope to email out bulletins so folks who plan to attend can print their own bulletins to reduce close personal interaction and the handling of common materials, with some bulletins being printed and available for those not able to bring their own. The offering plate will not be passed, but will be in a location where folks can leave an offering on the way in or out of the service.

As we plan to gather for Sunday worship services we want to emphasize the need to maintain caution in the wake of the ongoing battle against the Novel Coronavirus and COVID-19. If you are running an above normal temperature, have displayed any other potential symptoms of illness, have recently been in contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19, or are not yet comfortable venturing out into crowds, please stay home and stay safe. We will be here when you are able to rejoin us. While the number of new cases has been in decline in Butler and other nearby counties, the continued increase in confirmed cases indicates that the threat of contracting the virus is far from over.

If any changes are made to the plans to have a service on September 6 we will make every attempt to notify folks as quickly as possible.

Once again, thank you all for sticking with us as we have had to make many quick adjustments and difficult decisions in response to the pandemic.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

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

Andrew Sawyer
President and Moderator of the Council
The Shandon Congregational Church