

SAINT STEPHENS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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To the members of and friends of Saint Stephens UCC,

I am aware of the President of the United States declaration today that houses of worship are now essential. However, we will not be opening the sanctuary for in person worship. Here is why:

- (1) Lincoln County released COVID-19 recommendations today that state we maintain new social norms such as physical distancing, good hygiene, and frequent cleaning, we avoid gathering in large groups over 50 or that we limit the number of individuals to not exceed more than 25% of the total occupancy, and we use virtual options to meet others versus face to face.
- (2) I have said time and time again that we will not hold in person worship services at Saint Stephens until 100% of our congregation can be in the space. A common UCC saying is “All Are Welcome”, we even sing it on the occasional Sunday, and I am choosing to stick by that statement, meaning we will have in-person worship once all can be in the sanctaury together.
- (3) It’s about the safety of our Church Family. Yes, we all want to get back to things the way it was. But this decision to keep worship via WJMT and Facebook Live Stream has been made NOT through the lens of the healthiest bodies and what they can tolerate, but the most vulnerable.
- (4) As John C. Dohrhauer, General Minister and President of the UCC, said, our faith is essential. Our sanctuaries are not. They are beautiful, and inspiring. And we can express our thanksgiving to God with and without them. But never at the risk of another person’s health and safety.

In closing, I want to reassure you that Saint Stephens has been and will continue to be active this entire time. Remember, we dont need a sanctuary to give praise to God and we dont need a building to prove our faith. We Are the Church, No Matter Where We Meet.

Peace, Love, and Good Health to you all,

Rev. Lucas Williams