

# Back to Normal

Almost every weekend, I receive these two comments:

“I’m so glad things are getting back to normal.”

“I can’t wait until everything is back to normal.”

We are making progress toward “normal.” We are sharing communion together in a way that feels more “normal.” We are singing together again, at least a little bit. We are lifting restrictions as we’re able to do so safely.

And yet, we’re not fully there. There are still steps we take each time we gather in order to protect each other, especially the most vulnerable among us. In my mind, everything won’t be back to normal until we’re able to shed the masks, share the peace with a handshake or a hug, and sing “Alleluia” with no holding back!

But for now, for a little while longer at least, we continue to wear the masks, out of love for our neighbors.

Each weekend, we are delighted to see more familiar faces, joining us for in-person worship again after a long time away. It is a joy that I will never again take for granted – the ability to gather physically with other members of the Body of Christ for prayer, praise, hearing the Word, and receiving the Holy Meal. You may not be able to see the smile under my mask when you walk in and take your seat in worship, but I promise you, it’s there.

As we continue to make strides toward “normal,” we realize that our new normal will look different. Our body will look different –

members of our congregation have died, and we miss their presence among us. We have made the commitment to continue livestreaming worship each weekend into the future, because we know that it is another way we can reach people with God’s Word. But those who join us via the livestream are not able to join us at the Lord’s Table for Holy Communion. As one of your pastors, I can assure you that there is no greater joy than being able to look into your eyes as I offer you the bread and the words of promise, “The body of Christ, given for you.” And so I encourage you, when it’s safe for you to do so, to come and join us in person for worship. And when you’re unable to be here in person, for any reason (*including because you overslept or because you didn’t have any clean socks!*), join us on Facebook or on YouTube. Our worshipping body is more complete when you are a part of it.

We will have an opportunity to gather outdoors for worship in the park on May 23 for a Pentecost celebration! We will have pre-recorded worship available on Facebook and YouTube that morning at 8:15 a.m. for those who are unable to join us in person. Then we gather for **one worship service** at the band shell in City Park at 10:30 a.m., with special music to celebrate the special day! After worship, you are invited to join us for a picnic lunch. A Pentecost Picnic in the Park will be something new for us – and we are hoping it is so successful that we decide to make it a part of our “new normal!”

—Pastor Laura