



The United Methodist Church

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Dear Friends in Christ:

What a year this has been. With God's grace we have found our way through the maze of a global pandemic, not a journey any of us claim lightly. This Friday, Illinois arrives at Phase 5. What a day of rejoicing we are in.

You and your congregation have been part of this accomplishment. You have found ways to be a community to one another from a distance. You have found ways to be in your community as a witness of Christ love. Our goal these past 14 months was to "Do No Harm". We have learned new things about ourselves, we have learned new things about our congregations and now we take next steps in our return to full functioning as we continue to "Do No Harm" while also doing good.

Vaccinations are still key to our future. Seventy-five of our churches stepped up in the last few weeks to be vaccination sites working with United Methodists across the state and the Illinois Department of Public Health to reach those in pockets of our communities who have not yet been vaccinated. We know that variants of COVID -19 continue to emerge and that it will be some months before our younger population of children will be eligible for vaccination. Vigilance is still our watch word as we resume more and more activities.

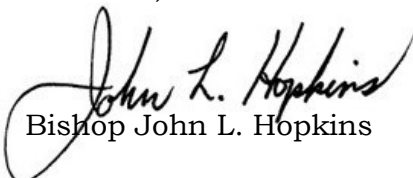
Each church community will move back into in-person worship and gatherings at their own pace, in their own way, given local guidelines and comfort levels in your congregation. We continue to encourage those who are able, to be vaccinated. We have attached some singing guidelines, for your consideration, provided by Jeff Hunt, Director of Music at St. Charles: Baker Memorial and professor of Choral Music.

I encourage you to continue utilizing your church's health team as you move into the future. This team has offered a great way to look at how the church conducts activities in a healthy manner. The pandemic has taught us that we cannot ignore the health and wellbeing of our members and community.

You can find sound advice on living into Phase Five in the church on our conference website. [Here is the link.](#)

I join you in celebrating this milestone as we look to the future. I invite you to "stay in love with God" as we find our way forward.

In Christ,



Bishop John L. Hopkins

JLH:mla



Guidelines for Congregational Singing Post-Covid 19

Jeff Hunt, Director of Music, Baker Memorial and Director of Music, St.Charles Singers.

June, 2021

1. According to the CDC and science, singing in worship is safe as long as you have been fully vaccinated for two weeks.
2. If not vaccinated, worshippers should wear a mask and follow social distancing guidelines.
3. Deciding to offer music can be gradual or all at once. Like removing a Band-Aid, you can remove it quickly or decide to go slowly. Consideration should be given for the congregation's specific needs and sensitivities.
4. Not everyone in the sanctuary will be vaccinated. Children, under the age of 12 are not yet approved for vaccination and are vulnerable to the virus.
5. Some people will be slow in moving away from wearing a mask. Taking a slow approach to reintroducing singing in worship will offer a welcoming atmosphere and hospitality.
6. You might wish to ease into congregational singing, fewer hymns or softly singing until everyone becomes comfortable with the experience.

For example: St. Charles: Baker Memorial has decided to do the following. There will be 8 social distanced singers who will still wear masks and provide music as the congregation eases into fuller congregational singing over time.