

Cherry Hills Family,

We want to let you know that beginning this coming Sunday (Nov 15), we have made the difficult decision to pause our in-person gatherings and **return to online-only worship**. We hope this is only for a season but based on medical experts and the recent surge in cases in Sangamon county, we want to neighbor well in the community God has placed us in. To that end, one of the best ways we can support our medical community and those suffering with Covid right now is to pause our largest in-person gatherings.

This decision was not made lightly and **was based on several factors**:

- Daily new cases in Sangamon County have more than doubled in the last 10 days; the positivity rate for our region continues to increase; and local hospitals are reaching capacity.
- Our medical consultants, who have helped us navigate the past 8 months, encouraged us to pause services immediately.
- The increase in number of positive cases have caused a greater number of people to decide to stay home and worship online. While our in-person attendance dropped by half last week, the number of people gathering online has been steadily increasing.
- Within our staff and church family we continue to see an increased number of people needing to quarantine.

We want to be clear about **what this does NOT mean**:

- The church (God's people) is NOT closed! The building may be for a season, but our mission (Matthew 28:18-20) is as urgent as ever.
- We can give ourselves to heartfelt prayer. In Philippians 4:6-7, the apostle Paul urges us not to be anxious, but to pray about everything, so we can know His peace. We can pray this not only for ourselves, but for our ones, our community, and our world.
- We don't need to sit idle. We can make the most of every opportunity (Ephesians 5:15-16) and live as sent people – right where we are.
- We are NOT without Hope. God's hope does NOT disappoint (Romans 5:5).

**A Personal Note:**

Cherry Hills, we thank God for you for your partnership in the Gospel (Philippians 1:5) and we are grateful for how you have engaged and sacrificed over the past season. We see you giving yourselves fully to Jesus and His mission in so many ways – even when it's very difficult! You were faithful in honoring the safety measures that were enacted for in-person gatherings and we are not aware of any virus transmission from our Sunday services. In addition, thank you to the hundreds of individuals and families joining us online each week. We miss you and continue to pray for God to remove this virus from among us so we can gather in safety once again.

Tomorrow you'll receive a video from Pastor Jeff sharing more about this decision. And we will continue to communicate with you regularly in the days ahead. Thanks for your prayers!

*Cherry Hills Leadership*