



August 19, 2020

### ***DECISIONS IN A PANDEMIC***

A year ago, there were many decisions that I did not give much time or thought. When we needed groceries, one of us went to the store. Now we must decide: do we order curbside pickup, or delivery, or put on a mask and go in person? The decisions are big and small. What kind of visit with friends is safe? How do we plan our son's wedding? What will school look like in the fall? When will we worship in person again, and how?

These are the questions that have been central in my mind. Our son's wedding is planned for October, and a guest list that was well over a hundred last winter has been reduced to immediate family at an outdoor service. It is a loss that aunts and uncles and cousins will not be there to share in the celebration, and a joy to contemplate an intimate ceremony. Loss and joy go hand in hand.

At church, I have been in discussion with the congregation's Reopening Task Force to plan for a phased reopening tied to the conditions of the virus. And I have been in numerous meetings to discuss the right set of plans for the weekday Nursery School in the Hills to proceed safely. As we consult with health experts, we are becoming amateur epidemiologists, following the data on charts that list total cases and positive test rates.

Jesus summarized all the teaching about a faithful life by citing just two commandments: love God, and love your neighbors. We are at a time when loving our neighbors is demonstrated in safe actions to mitigate the risk of infectious spread. In all decisions, from personal daily activity to institutional planning, my guiding principle is the safety and health of one another. Specific plans for reopening at the church will be ready to share soon, as renovation work in the church nears completion in September.

It is a loss to approach September without plans for a big Rally Day Sunday at church, and without a fully enrolled nursery school during the week. But I also find that I am newly treasuring the connections that we are able to safely make. It was easy to take our connections for granted in the time before. Every face on a Zoom call, every voice on the phone, every chance encounter on a walk through the neighborhood, where we talk from opposite sides of the street, is like a cup of cool water in the desert heat. Loss and joy go hand in hand.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster  
Senior Minister