

Hello Skyland Family,

As the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus noted, “Nothing endures but Change.” That seems to sum up the state of our world these days, as well as the state of Skyland UMC as we strive to keep up with the changes! But he also said, “It is in changing that we find Purpose.” With that in mind, Skyland family, we ask you to buckle up and hang on for the ride as we all move forward, and as your staff and lay leaders continue to plan the resumption of our worship services and programming as we approach the summer. Please be assured that our clergy, staff members, lay leaders, and church committee members are all open to your input and have been listening to your comments thus far! We’re working hard to incorporate your input into planning – as, instead of just “*returning back to normal*,” we actually work toward “*moving forward with purpose*.”

The most exciting piece of news to share with you is that beginning **May 30th**, we will be modifying our Covid precaution restrictions to align more closely with the new North Carolina protocols. We will NO longer require reservations for our worship services. There will be NO limit on the capacity of seating. But please still be respectful of the wishes of those around you. We ask you to “be smart” and act in a responsible manner to still protect yourself and others. If you have a fever, symptoms, or a recent Covid exposure, please stay home.

***Please note** - as we are a congregation of young and old, vaccinated and not, according to WNCC recommendations, we will continue to **REQUIRE MASKS** indoors.*

These steps toward fully reopening will also include the option for groups such as Sunday School classes and Fellowship Small groups to return to campus. (As before, scheduling of meeting spaces will be coordinated through Pat, our keeper-of-the-calendar.)

For at least the next several weeks, we will continue with one worship service in the sanctuary at 10:30. This service will include congregational singing (masked) and will be a little longer than the recent 30-minute services. Linda has diligently planned a variety of musical worship styles for these services – contemporary praise band, children’s handbells, guest musicians – so we all have a variety to look forward to!

For those of you asking about a separate casual, contemporary-style service... please know that we are working on that! The move to a second service is not at all limited by our desire or focus on that need, but instead, by our staffing capabilities. We hear you – this is important! But with Lance’s departure, we don’t currently have anyone in place to lead our band, or even enough band members willing to be back inside playing this summer to consistently have a praise band presence. As we speak, the Staff-Parish-Relations Committee (SPRC) is working on filling that Worship Leader position, if even on an interim basis. A subcommittee for Contemporary Worship is also being formed to work alongside our current Worship Committee. Along those same lines, Pastor Dan is working with an interim Youth Council to continue programming for our youth as the SPRC works to fill the Youth Director position.

We have so many reasons to celebrate! Our campus is opening up in a responsible manner. Children’s Church and the Nursery will begin again on June 6th. This summer we will host both

Vacation Bible School and Music Camp. Ten of our youth (with Jim Galloway) will participate in the Wilderness Trail program. Our local outreach missions (e.g. Blessing Box, Manna Food box distribution, Bridges Reading Enrichment Program, Community Garden preparations), as well as our Covid-19 Relief Fund, have regularly served our surrounding community. Our standing committees have all continued to meet. Fellowship has been shared among our small groups. Let's be excited for the way our family has pulled together to comfort each other and make it through this pandemic year.

Skyland family, we ask you to celebrate with us. We ask you to be patient, but expectant and hopeful as we're moving forward. We know this pandemic has changed us all. Skyland UMC will be changed as well – and we want it to be a change for the better! We ask you to give your input, but also to be willing to step up and pitch in wherever your time and talents lie. Changes (even those that are just a return to a routine) will take an effort from each of us. We ask you to pray for our staff, our leaders, and our church family as a whole – to keep our mission to Grow, Love and Serve in our sights, and to keep our aim at spreading the good news of Jesus.

Worship Service Dates to note:

- May 23rd – the 10:30 service in the sanctuary remains as originally planned, with Eventbrite registration, masks, and social distancing. Fun bonus – the music will be provided by the Children's Hand Bell Choir.
- May 30th – here comes the big step forward! This 10:30 service in the sanctuary will be open to all who wish to attend – NO reservations. (The previous Eventbrite link sent out is no longer needed.) Masks required. No limits on seating – please act responsibly. The children will be encouraged to come forward for the Children's sermon. The praise music will be provided by Anna Groome, Michael Poole and Linda.
- June 6th – this 10:30 service in the sanctuary will be our first to offer Children's Church AND the Nursery. Music will be provided by Ross Turman and Linda. At 5:00pm, an online communion service will be livestreamed on the Skyland UMC YouTube channel.

As we can clearly see, "Change is Constant"... so stay tuned for frequent update communications!

In Christ,

Your Covid-19 Executive Team:

Charles Frederick (Administrative Board)

Kyle Addison (Finance)

Scott Jones (Trustees)

Ned Fowler (SPRC)

Sharon Blythe (Communications)

Jack Harrison (Covid-19 Relief Fund)

Sandy Frederick (Lay Leader)

Pastor Dan

Pastor Joy