

July 9, 2020

Dear First Church Family,

As I begin another communication regarding coronavirus guidelines, I want you to know how much we appreciate the support and encouragement you continue to give us as we make decisions about worship and ministry during this time. We see you joyfully coming to worship during assigned times and / or livestreaming with us. We see you giving faithfully to the church. The Executive Committee heard a positive report this week on giving during the month of June, which we are very thankful for. And some of you have also sent notes of encouragement. We are blessed to serve as elders, deacons and staff members of First Church.

Last week, there was news of singing being banned from worship in California. The Executive Committee met this week to consider that news and how to respond. For two reasons, our decision is that we will continue to sing as we always have.

First. The guidelines that have been sent out are not consistent. In one part of the guidelines it sounds as if it is mandatory that we discontinue singing. However, there is also a section of the guidelines titled "Considerations" where they ask churches to merely *consider* refraining from singing. Hence, we do not believe we are disobeying our governing authorities by continuing to sing.

Second. More importantly, we are commanded in the Scriptures to sing. The Psalms mention singing more than 70 times, and many of the references are commands to sing. Psalm 149:1 specifically tells us to sing as an assembly:

*Praise the LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!*

The New Testament also commands us to sing. More specifically it calls us to address one another with singing. Ephesians 5:18-21 says:

*...be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,
giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Hence, we believe we would be dishonoring God to gather together for worship and not sing.

We realize that this may make some of you uncomfortable and you may no longer want to come into the sanctuary for the services. If so, we want you to know we love you, we understand your concern, and we hope you will continue to worship with us via livestream. **We also continue to encourage those who are high risk to livestream rather than attend in person.**

These decisions are difficult, and we covet your continued prayers.

Building, serving, and loving with you,

Pastor Glenn on behalf of the Executive Committee