**A Prayer for the Seventh Week of Virtual Church**

O Lord our God, the focus in many congregations has now shifted to why, how, what, where, and when the move from virtual church to live church should take place.

With wisdom some congregations are figuring out innovations for how they can gather people yet maintain a safe physical and social distance. They are less focused on the when than they are on the innovations that will empower a significant presence as both the gathered and scattered church. They have learned to do church in different ways, and some of these are adding value to the church.

With trepidations some congregations are saying it is now time to get back together. We have stayed home, stayed safe, and saved lives for a reasonable period, and it is now time to focus more on the gathered church. The secular world is opening up, and congregations cannot be left behind. “Let’s take a calculated risk to do something” is the cry to move forward.

With cultural insight some congregations are realizing that after several weeks of virtual church many people broke the habit of getting up, getting dressed, and going to church. They wonder – have people now solidified the habit of wearing their pajamas, drinking a cup of the coffee they like best, and sitting in their favorite chair while reasonably focused on a virtual worship service? We cannot make this the norm.

With economic concern some congregations are not experiencing the income they would typically see when congregational participants are live in the worship center. Or, they have an increasing number of families and other households who are now unemployed. They are concerned by the lack of income from a non-gathered church.

With political reactivity some congregations are responding to what government officials are telling them they must do or can do. With government officials appropriately seeking to open back up the economy, congregations want to follow the lead of political leaders and open their church back up. Are these the right leaders to follow?

Where is right, goodness, compassion, idealism, and hope in the midst of these complex issues? Although these are legitimate thoughts, perhaps this is an inadequate question. The best question may be – where are You, O God, in the midst of these complex issues?

Ultimately the why, how, what, where, and when of opening back up our churches must be a spiritual decision supported by a great strategy for doing so. There is no one best strategic answer that works for every congregation. There is only one Lord who can ultimately guide our decisions and actions.

As we have all the facts and trends together, may we ultimately seek to discern what You are saying to our congregation. May we continue to move forward, as we have always claimed to do, with a clear sense of Your guidance for our footsteps.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.