

## 5-28-20 COVID-19 Response Update

As we move into the month of June, I wanted to keep you updated on our current church policies relating to COVID-19. Our Session, staff, and Presbytery have continued in ongoing discussions and prayerful discernment. This has not been an easy time. Ways forward are not clear, and consensus has been elusive or hard-won.

Our Session most recently met on Tuesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, and after two hours of deliberation, voted on the following items as our collective efforts in keeping people as safe as possible while also equipping people for the mission of God in our community and beyond.

- **In general**, our Session and staff are working toward a staggered approach to re-opening in-person activities within the church. If we have felt that May has not been safe for in-person gatherings, we do not feel that a first step toward re-opening should include a full resumption to all activities as they were before. We are evaluating the myriad of events, programs, meetings, and services that happen within our facilities, and opening what we can when we feel it is prudent. Session and staff recognize that restrictions and conditions in our community are changing frequently. Thus the process of re-opening will be ongoing.
- The **office** will remain closed through June, even as various staff work either in the office or from home. The best ways to reach staff is still by their cell phones and email addresses, but we are also regularly checking the office phones as well.
- **KidZone** remains open, maintaining its current practices, with the suggestion that parents keep their children at home if possible, and certainly if sick.
- In order to keep KidZone safe and free of contamination, we are not holding **other events** in the spaces where children gather unless we are able to do a deep clean and ensure proper sanitation after the event and before the return of children.
- If the insurance coverage is present, with proper social distancing practices, we are allowing **12-step recovery groups** to resume meeting in person in our Shalom Center.
- **Session, Ministry Teams, Deacons, and Foundation meetings** will continue to meet online in June.
- We will continue with **regular online offerings**, the daily Scripture reflection at 11am and Thursday evening worship songs with Gabriel and Mary at 6pm.
- We also are continuing with **Marco Polo conversation groups**. You can click on this link to see a short video about what this app does. <https://bit.ly/2RWv59P>. Also, check out <https://www.marcopolo.me> to download the app for your smartphone. You can join a men's group, women's group, sermon discussion group, and a questions about the faith discussion group. If you want to join any of the groups, *you need to notify us and we'll add you*. The easiest way to do that is a call, text, or email to me and I can add you. That's 925-788-2245 or [hillaustind@gmail.com](mailto:hillaustind@gmail.com).
- **Regarding worship services**, we will continue offering our 10am online worship service on Sunday mornings. On Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, we will add an in-person worship service at 8:45am in the Sanctuary. Due to the measures we'll outline below, both services will be different in their emphasis.

- For the immediate future, we will continue to pre-record our **online services** and worship with you all online at 10am. We will record the service altogether, in the sanctuary and provide an accompanying service bulletin digital copy on the top of our webpage at [www.fpcfd.org](http://www.fpcfd.org)
- Our **in-person worship service** will be at 8:45am in the sanctuary. We are limiting attendance to 100, in order to ensure proper social distancing measures. Please make sure that you come early to ensure you have a spot. We will have pews spaced out where people can sit and the balcony will be open. Pastors will be at each narthex door, guiding to you to an appropriate place to be seated. Families are invited to sit together, otherwise, 6 feet of distance should be maintained.
- Please bring your mask to wear for the service. If you do not have one, we'll have some extras available for you in the narthex.
- Only the commons door and main sanctuary door will be opened on Sunday morning. These doors will be propped open as people gather for the service. Both of these doors are on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The commons door has wheelchair ramps and handicapped parking spaces in front.
- For at least the month of June, we will not have Communion.
- We will not have printed bulletins for the service, but will include all service elements on the screen.
- We will not be singing as a congregation during this service, while there will still be music and many opportunities for congregational engagement.
- We will not have nursery or child care available during the service, but we will include video content specifically designed for children during the service.
- After the service we will not have a coffee hour as we have done in the past.
- Due to the limitations in place, we will be structuring this service differently from our traditional 8:45am service, and we will also alter our online service. The in-person service will offer various elements for contemplation, worship, and participation. We are excited to consider some new ways to worship together.
- As you might imagine, not all of these elements translate well to an online service. The online service will still continue with congregational singing, as we have been doing in recent weeks.

We realize that these measures may sound extreme to some and like they're not enough to others. I continue to be proud of our church and how we have worked together through this difficult time. I would like to emphasize that much of this is in flux, and each week, the services will look a little different. We are committed to people's safety while also doing the work God has called us to do. That being said, we are also committed to providing an online option and a safe in-person option in the days ahead. Presbyterians have historically been a people who believe in the freedom of conscience. However, we are also a large community, made up of people from all ages and backgrounds. God is calling us to be stewards of the facilities we have, and the lives of our brothers and sisters.

On this Pentecost weekend, we are reminded that the Holy Spirit came to people of all nations. God's Spirit is mysteriously present with us wherever and however we gather, empowering us to enact God's will in our lives and beyond.

I am grateful to be a partner in ministry with you.

Blessings,  
Austin D. Hill  
*Lead Pastor*