

7-30-20 COVID-19 Response Update

As we approach the final month of the summer, we would like to reach out to you with updates concerning our church's ongoing response to COVID-19. While there is much uncertainty about the fall, we'd like to let you know about what is certain.

Throughout the summer our Session has been in conversation about how we can move forward with the ministry of church while keeping people as safe as possible at the same time.

- **We continue with a staggered approach to resuming in-person activities**, looking for more ways to build connections with one another responsibly.
- The **office** will open on Monday morning, August 3rd, by appointment. Our staff have been working in the office in July, but we have still been encouraging people not to come in. Now, if you'd like to stop by, please just call the office at 515-576-2091 so that we can make sure the office isn't overly crowded.
- **KidZone** remains open, maintaining its current practices, with the suggestion that parents keep their children at home if possible, and certainly if sick. KidZone staff take temperatures of children each day and children are dropped off and picked up all in the CLC entrance.
- In order to keep KidZone safe and free of contamination, we are limiting other outside events that take place in the spaces KidZone uses. There needs to be ample time to sanitize environments between events in order to consider approving them.
- **12-step recovery groups** have resumed meeting in person in our Shalom Center.
- A few in-person ministry opportunities like the **wheelchair ministry** have resumed, with regular temperature checks and attendance.
- **Session, Ministry Teams, Deacons, and Foundation meetings** will meet online in August.
- We will continue with **regular online offerings**, the daily Scripture reflection at 11am and Thursday evening worship songs with Gabriel and Mary at 6pm.
- In mid-August, we are hosting two evening gatherings to hear from parents about how they are doing in the midst of this pandemic. We're calling it **Hops and Hopes**. It will take place on Wednesday 8/19 and Thursday 8/20 from 5-7pm. More details will be available on all our media outlets soon.
- We are still working out our plan for our **fall programs**. Children's and youth events will likely include small group gatherings rather than one large group on Wednesday afternoon. Pastor Rebecca is reaching out to families and potential small group leaders. You will hear more about these plans in the coming weeks as well.
- Pastor Sara has been working with our caregivers, deacons, and elders to coordinate another round of **checking in with all of our members**. If there's somebody you think has been falling through the cracks, please let us know so that we can reach out to them.
- Gabriel is in communication with our **praise team, chancel choir, and chancel bell members** about creative ways to utilize people's talents in smaller groups for upcoming services.
- **Regarding Sunday worship services**, we will continue with our **in-person** service in the sanctuary at 8:45am. However, we are changing the time of our **online service**.

- **Starting Sunday, August 30th, our online service will be live-streamed from the sanctuary at 10:30am.** You can still find the service on our Facebook and YouTube pages. This change in worship time is so that we can lead the service in real-time. Our webpage at www.fpcfd.org will still have a copy of the bulletin so that you can follow along. We will be gradually introducing a few more people to help lead these services like singers and musicians.
 - The reason for the time change is to make sure that we have enough time to finish with the 8:45 in-person service and get the sanctuary and staff ready for beginning the live-stream. We believe streaming the service will create a more unified experience for everybody participating and will give us more future options for doing different kinds of services.
- **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. Pastors will be at each narthex door, guiding 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 5th Avenue North. The commons door has wheelchair ramps and handicapped parking spaces in front.
 - We are having individually served Communion on the first Sunday of each month.
 - 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, though there will still be music and many opportunities for congregational engagement. We are hoping to include small groups of singers and musicians in this service as well.
 - 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.
- 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 hill austind@gmail.com .

I've heard it said in the leadership and ministry circles that we're all finding that re-opening our physical spaces is much more complicated than closing them was. I continue to be in regular conversation with local pastors and Presbyterian colleagues from all over the country about the most faithful paths forward. Your partnership, generosity, encouragement, understanding, and support during this time has been appreciated very much.

I continue to be grateful to partner in ministry with you.

Blessings,
Austin D. Hill
Lead Pastor