

Faith Presbyterian Church

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To the Congregation of Faith Presbyterian Church,

We would like to update you on our plans for conducting worship services and other church meetings during the summer of 2020.

Since June 14th, we have been holding outdoor services on Sundays at 8:45, 11:00, and 1:15; online services at 11:00 and 6:00; and prayer meeting via Zoom. We have been doing so in ways we consider reasonably safe. We continue using the “Big Four” mitigation strategies—wearing masks, maintaining 6 ft social distancing, washing/sanitizing hands, and self-isolating when ill. We are taking these actions in order to balance worshipping the Lord rightly and protecting our most vulnerable members. Further, we want to maintain a good witness to our neighbors and avoid super-spreader events, such as we’ve seen with the March 2020 choir practice in Skagit County and services held this spring at a church in eastern Oregon.

In the near term, we are expanding our use of the tent and plan to hold one service indoors. As you may know, just this past week we held the mid-week Youth Group meeting outdoors in the tent. The meeting used the Big Four, as well as other requirements. If you lead an FPC ministry, would like to hold a meeting in the tent, and understand and are willing to enforce all of the requirements, please contact Mr. Whaley, our Church Administrator.

As announced yesterday, beginning July 19 we plan to hold the 6:00 service in the tent while continuing to make it available on our livestream. That same day, we plan to begin holding the 8:45 service indoors. We are starting with just one indoor service initially, which will allow us to identify many of the new complexities involved with indoor worship. We intend to expand to more indoor services in August.

Please note that this indoor service will not be an exact replica of the Sunday morning worship services we have enjoyed for many years. It will be shorter and have less congregational singing, and we will distribute the Lord’s Supper elements to people sitting in the pews. Between 125 and 150 people will be able to participate, and they will still need to sign-up online so that we can plan appropriately. Masking and social distancing will still be necessary. Next week, we will explain more about these changes and what to expect of an indoor service.

By the beginning of September, we hope all of our services and mid-week meetings will be inside. We will gradually expand from the one (8:45) indoor service in July, to two (8:45 and 6:00), and then to all three (8:45, 11:00 and 6:00). That will prepare us to hold all worship services and mid-week meetings indoors when it is too cold and wet to meet outside in the tent.

This gradual approach will also help us, the deacons, and the church staff identify and address any gaps or unforeseen problems. Over the course of the summer, we want all of us to be familiar and comfortable with our indoor services and their associated patterns. We aren’t publishing a schedule for moving indoors because we think there is a risk that unforeseen events could prevent us from meeting such a schedule.

We understand that many of us are uncomfortable with or clearly should not attend services in person. Please continue worshipping remotely via the livestream. No one should feel like they MUST attend in person.

We hope to begin allowing small groups to meet indoors soon and will announce when we are ready to do so. Meeting indoors will involve social distancing and several other administrative steps. The church office will help provide guidance on clearing those steps when we are ready to allow those activities to resume. We do not anticipate resuming Children's Ministry until at least the fall.

Making these plans forces us to balance good but competing needs. The Lord calls us, His people, to worship Him; and we want to do so in ways that keep our neighbors safe. We love to sing praises to our God, but unfettered singing is a contributor to spreading the coronavirus. We want Sunday services that minister to those who attend and honor those whose health could be affected if they joined us in person. We desire to honor our Lord while preserving health and meeting public health guidelines. There is no playbook for this decision-making, and we understand that not everyone will enthusiastically agree with every decision we make. Please pray for us, the deacons, and the church staff, that we would wisely and practically design and implement plans to increase our indoor worship services and mid-week meetings. Pray for the unity of our church and the worldwide church during these challenging times.

Finally, these times are difficult for all of us. Some are working fewer hours or have lost jobs altogether. Others have been working but doing so in close proximity to the sick—and are concerned about infecting their loved ones. Being confined, working from home, or attending school remotely, all amplify our daily struggles. Whatever your situation, please contact the deacons or us as we want to help share your burdens.

-The Session of Faith Presbyterian Church