**FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF FPC**

**UPDATE: OUR RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

With a desire to love our neighbors as ourselves and an abundance of caution for the members of our church and community amidst a global pandemic that is affecting our city, **as of Sunday, March 22, all FPC worship gatherings are moved online until further notice.** Please plan to worship online this Sunday at klamathfpc.com at 9 am. After that we will film the service and the praise set during the week and make them available for viewing whenever you desire on Sunday or any time thereafter.

In addition, the FPC campus will remain open for staff, those who’d like to come and pray, those in need of comfort and counseling, and for those needing assistance. All other groups which normally meet on Sundays and during the week are encouraged to explore alternate means of staying closely connected with one another. See our recommendations for small groups.

Currently we have asked the Parish leaders to reach out and contact the people in their parish and set up a phone tree or some method of staying connected to those in their parish. You will be receiving a call or email this week to let you know about the decisions the leadership have made concerning our response to the current crisis and how to access information and resources to help you through this season, stay connected to your church, and serve our community.

**WHY ARE WE MOVING FPC WORSHIP GATHERINGS ONLINE AND WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH CAMPUS?**

Our goal in these decisions, as in everything we do, is to glorify God as biblically and wisely as possible. By God’s design, according to God’s Word, the church thrives on gathering together face-to-face as we love one another, care for one another, and encourage one another by doing things like singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to one another. As much as we are thankful for technology that allows for us to do many of these things online, a biblical picture of a church prioritizes being together in person. This is why Christians around the world gather together every single Sunday, some at the risk of their lives.

At the same time, the reasons above concerning why we normally gather in person are the same reasons why we are choosing not to gather in person right now. Because the Bible calls us to care for one another and love one another (and all our neighbors) as ourselves, we believe the best way we can do that in light of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) situation is by not gathering physically.

If we were to come together for a normal Sunday, it is likely that unknowing carriers of the virus or other viruses would expose many others to it. Those exposed would then scatter from our building into and beyond our city, increasing the likelihood of people not only at our buildings, but in and beyond our city, being exposed to this virus. All of this would be harmful for church members and guests as well as people far beyond our church, many of whom are more at-risk physically due to either age or medical conditions.

For these reasons, we believe the best way we can love our neighbors as ourselves in this unique time is to participate in publicly endorsed strategies of containment, including social distancing (defined by the CDC as “remaining out of congregate settings and avoiding mass gatherings”). Further, in light of the number of people who will meet, exceeding the number permissible by our government at this time, we believe the wisest way to love them all is to limit their exposure to this virus by moving worship online and encouraging everyone for the next two weeks to not meet in small groups. We are keeping the church building open for visitors and those feeling the need to come and pray, while maintaining a safe distance from others.

This does not mean, however, that we are closing the activities of the church. Quite the opposite is true. This is a time for us to be the church like never before! Look at all the documents on our website under the heading of FPC’s Response to the COVID-19 virus. You’ll find a myriad of helps, guidance and resources to help our ministries continue, keep the membership connected and cared for, and the community engaged.

**HOW WILL WE SPREAD GOD’S LOVE ACROSS OUR CITY DURING THIS TIME?**

In the midst of a global pandemic, we want to be a clear picture of God’s love across our city. One of the ways we can show God’s love is by participating in publicly endorsed strategies of containment, including social distancing. That’s why we’re not gathering together in person – because this is one of the best ways we can love others right now. At the same time, we don’t want to isolate people who are in need all around us. As a church together and as individual Christians, we want to care for others in any way that we can according to all the health and safety guidelines and recommendations made by government leaders and health professionals.

Therefore, we are encouraging all groups, small groups and ministry groups for the next two week not to meet. In two weeks we will re-evaluate the situation and adjust our recommendations accordingly.

If you are considering reaching out to your neighbor, a safe way to do so is by using a flyer that we created that you can put in the door of your neighbor as a way of introducing yourself without intimidating your neighbor or striking fear in them. People fear social contact at this time. The flyer is being made available online for those who want to use it. It’s a template. You can edit it so it reflects the way(s) you are offering to reach out to your neighbors.

To minimize the financial impact on our community we encourage you, if you have the means, to bless those businesses that are the most impacted by the virus by ordering online or delivery, being generous with your tip, contacting the people and places you do business with and ask how they have been impacted, in particular if they had to lay anyone off. If so let them know the church is taking up a collection to offer relief to those most heavily affected and that they should contact the church. We can’t do everything, but we can do something.

**HOW SHOULD I RESPOND PHYSICALLY TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?**

If you are sick with a cough or running a fever, or you have a compromised immune system in other ways, we encourage you to remain at home and/or seek proper medical attention. Please also alert your church family so that we can best help and support you.

If you are elderly or have existing medical conditions that might place you at higher risk in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19), we strongly encourage you to limit your interactions with others during these days. At the same time, we ask you to please let us as your church family know how we can best help and support you.

Regardless of age or medical condition, we encourage everyone to take certain steps to protect themselves and others from the coronavirus, flu, and other illnesses, including:

* Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
* Using hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available;
* Not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
* Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
* Staying home if you are sick;
* Covering your cough or sneeze;
* Disinfecting objects and surfaces regularly.

**HOW SHOULD I RESPOND SPIRITUALLY TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is yet one more reminder that we live in a fallen world of sickness, sin, suffering, and death. Ultimately, none of us are immune to any of these things. But that’s why the gospel is such good news. God has not left us alone in this world of sickness, sin, suffering, and death. He has come to us in the person of Jesus. The greatest news in all the world is that Jesus lived a life with no sin, died on a cross to pay the price for our sin, and rose from the grave in victory over sin and death. Now anyone anywhere who turns from their sin and trusts in Jesus will be forgiven of all their sin and restored to relationship with God forever. That means that through Jesus, we never have to fear sickness or death because we know we have eternal life with God.

If you do not know that you have eternal life with God, we urge you to put your faith in Jesus. And if you do know that you have eternal life with God, we urge you to share your faith in Jesus with others. Times like these remind us all of the fragility of life and the inevitability of death. So let’s spread the greatest news that death has been defeated and eternal life is available to all who trust in Jesus.

In addition to trusting in Jesus and sharing about Jesus with others, here’s some other ways you can respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19):

* Trust in God as the good and sovereign Creator and Sustainer of life upon whom we all depend.
* Pray for mercy for the sick, strength for doctors, insight for researchers, and wisdom for officials.
* Look for opportunities to love and care for others, whether they are sick, isolated, marginalized, poor, or oppressed. Check out our “Outreach” communique for ways we are reaching out to our neighbors, church members, and community.
* Avoid every semblance of prejudice or racism. In light of the origination of this virus in Asia, it grieves us to see a rise in racist incidents against the Asian community.
* Even if we are unable to gather at certain times, stay closely connected to the church family. See our communique on “Recommendations for Groups at FPC.” There are lots of practical helps to help you stay connected to one another.
* Continue to faithfully give financial offerings online or by mail so that the ministry of the church thrives all the more in the midst of difficult days. If you’d like to give online but need help setting it up email Kris Bienz at Krisbienz@gmail.com or call her at: 541-891-5725. Do not use the number in the directory. It is wrong. Church address: 601 Pine Street, KF, OR 97601.
* Reflect often on the brevity of life, the urgency of eternity, and the beauty of the gospel.