The Reopening Plan

for First Presbyterian Church, Klamath Falls

Hi FPC Family:

The day we’ve been working so hard for has finally come. The Phase 1 proposal from the Klamath County Commissioners was approved which means, starting May 15th groups of 25 are allowed to meet physically as long as two requirements are met, social distancing (6 feet apart) and proper sanitation practices are followed.

I am so proud of our FPC Family. You all have grit, especially our older members. Though isolated they have thrived. Everyone has been cooperative and followed our closing protocols and as a result, not one of our members or attenders, nor any of their kids or grandkids or even great grand kids have come down with the virus. Well done everyone.

We hope our reopening will garner the same results. Every decision we have made is for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of all our members, especially those most vulnerable. It would be too hard on us all if the virus spiked and we had to go back to square one. So we’ve decided to remain cautious and optimistic. You may not agree with every decision we’ve made. Those who are ready to return now will think we are being too cautious. Others who are more sensitive to the pandemic may feel as if we are going too fast. We’ve tried to balance both perspectives and open in a way that hopefully gives everyone the confidence they need to return to worship.

Everything we decided has been guided by the best of science and the encouragement of scripture. One chapter in the Bible is particularly helpful when making decision on issues that are neither moral nor spiritual but have more to do with one’s comfort level, personal conscience, and sensitivities. Read Romans 14.

Basically it says that those who are less sensitive or less bothered by something (In Romans 14 the issue was eating meat sacrificed to idols) should defer to those who are more sensitive or personally uncomfortable with certain things, in our case, going back to church. Paul says it is a loving thing to make room for the “weaker brother or sister.” The word “weaker” is not referring to being a wimp. It refers to being more sensitive, less comfortable with a practice. So that’s our goal, practicing loving one another by doing our best to include everyone and to help everyone feel confident that when they come to church they will be safe and remain healthy. We do not want to give into fear and at the same time we do want to be faithful to scripture and respectful of each other.

**The Process for Reopening Worship:**

Beginning Sunday May 24th (next Sunday) we will reopen for worship. The service will begin at 10:00AM. We are only allowed to have 25 people in any given room. We can only put 25 in the sanctuary. So in order to accommodate everyone who wants to attend worship, we are opening up multiple rooms: the sanctuary, and Fellowship Hall. All the rooms will be set up so people can view the service.

We will continue to livestream the service for those who should not return (the elderly, ill and those with underlying conditions) and for those who want to wait and see what happens as the state reopens. We encourage everyone to come back when they are ready to. We respect everyone’s decision. You need to do what is right for you! We will get back to normal; it’ll just take time.

In order to follow the guidelines for reopening and to make it fair for all, we are taking reservations. If you are planning on coming to worship call the church office (541-884-7781) and make your reservation. Tell us who you are, how many are in your family (We will seat people by families), and your seating preference. All reservations are first come, first serve.

If the two areas fill up we will offer a second service at 12 noon. On May 28th we will review this initial plan and make adjustments as needed.

If you make a reservation but have to cancel please let us know as soon as possible so we can call those who did not have a reservation.

We will have two entrances. If you have a seat in the sanctuary, enter the main entrance, through the upstairs doors leading to the sanctuary. If you are in the Fellowship Hall, then enter through the downstairs door leading to the fellowship hall.

If you are ill for any reason, stay at home! Any person with underlying health issues we encourage you to stay at home during Phase 1. Let’s see what this virus does first before returning. We want to make sure everyone is safe. We’d hate to see anyone contract this virus because of our Phase 1 opening plan!

Video streaming of the worship service will continue for the foreseeable future.

The Praise portion will be taped and shown on the screen so people can participate in the singing. This is so we can maximize the number of people permitted in the sanctuary.

**Protocols for those Attending:**

During Phase 1, May 24th through June 7th, we are requiring masks. I know this may seem overly cautious for some but for half our congregation, it is not. So out of love for all, we ask you to wear a mask. We want as many as possible to come back to worship and this small act will help a lot of people feel more comfortable doing so! Again this will be just for the next two to three weeks.

We will have Hosts who will assist in seating people at safe distances and in dismissing people from back to front in order to maintain social distancing as people enter and depart. Once each room is filled I will call people who are in that room to become Hosts for the Day.

We will seat people in family units and 6 feet apart from the next family unit. We will also be seating every other row and staggering the rows. The rows will also be marked. Red means “stop, don’t sit in this pew” and green means it’s a go ahead, you can sit in that row.

Offering plates will be placed at the back of each room so worshipers can drop their offering into the plates.

All fellowship will take place outside the building. For the safety of all please wear masks and distance yourself socially. But stay as long as you want and get reconnected. We also encourage people to go to a local restaurant and fellowship in groups of 10 and under.

All rooms, pews, restrooms, doorknobs, etc. have been sanitized and if a second service is required, there will be a sanitation team to sanitize between services.

We will take communion together on June 7th using prepackaged communion kits that people can pick up as they enter the service. Each kit has a wafer and a cup of juice. Once used the packaging can be placed in the plastic bag it was sealed in and discarded as people leave.

**Small groups and ministry teams**

All small groups, ministry teams and committees may begin meeting at the church or in each other’s homes now. Our county officials and your church leadership urge you to follow the safe distancing standards and follow proper sanitation protocols.

All groups can decide for themselves how and when they want to meet. Some may continue to meet online.

If you want to meet at the church, please make a reservation with Scott Dickson so we can make sure the room is available, sanitized and set up for your group. There will be sanitation stations in every room. Sanitize the room following the meeting and then post the sign provided indicating the room has been sanitized so the next group using the room will know it is safe.

**Children's and youth ministry**

During Phase 1 there will be no nursery, Sunday school, or youth meetings. Online lessons will continue. Packets will be provided for any family with a child sitting with them in the pew during worship.

VSB has been canceled, but materials are being prepared so that, if a green light is given later in the summer, we can reopen VBS fast. I know it would be a great service to our families to give them respite from their kids and more time alone as couples or as a single parent needing person time.

One need that is emerging among our members and community is the need for parents to get alone time, time away from their kids. So we encourage everyone who does not have kids to look for ways they can give exhausted parents down time.

**Socializing safely**

During Phase one, churches are encouraged to avoid providing food or beverages for safety reasons. So we will not serve coffee or hold brunches at the church during Phase 1. You can bring your own coffee to church. You can also socialize together and even break bread together.

Consider these options and come up with your own:

* + Parking lot, front yard, patio fellowships with box lunches
  + Bring Your Own Bag or order take-out and go to someone's house or a park and eat together.
  + Go to a restaurant as a group of 10 or less

Nursing homes and assisted living places are still not permitting visitors. But you can still give them a call or talk to them using signs they can read. If they have a window that opens you can talk to them from afar.

**Phase 2 & 3 Plans – To Be Determined**

A special Session meeting will be held at the church on Thursday, May 28 to review Phase 1 process and to begin planning Phase 2 if all goes well and the virus continues to dissipate. Be in prayer for that. We do not want to go back to square one!

Blessings,

The Session of First Presbyterian Church