

The First Presbyterian Church of Everett

Reopening Plan

Introduction

The First Presbyterian Church of Everett (FPCE) values worshipping together, being a welcoming community, and using our sanctuary as a witness to Christ. We desire to love God with our entire being and our neighbor as ourselves.

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Everett (FPCE) is adopting these guidelines as we move toward reopening our sanctuary for worship. Our objective is to resume normal program activities consistent with ensuring the safety of our members and friends. We will fully comply with governmental and Presbytery guidance regarding safety measures and rate of resumption.

Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

John 13:24-35

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24. “All things are lawful,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other.

This period of restarting and regathering, following self-quarantine, is a time where we exercise our Christian love to one another. This reopening plan is written out of love for our church family, our neighbor in the pew, and a call to discipleship. Please read it as opportunities for us to demonstrate selfless love to our brothers and sisters in Christ. While we might not agree 100% with some of the things in this reopening plan, we will defer to it because our plan creates a place where people can feel safe to come and gather for worship.

We have a flexible 4 Step plan. Depending on Washington State, the Snohomish Health District, our city, and our Presbytery, we may need to step down or pause a step as numbers adjust. We pray for health and a continued downtrend in cases of COVID-19 in our city, county, state, and country. We are all in this together.

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Stay Home Reminder

In general, if you are uncomfortable being in public gatherings during this time, then please feel free to remain at home and come when you feel it is safe for you to do so. We understand that each of our congregants' situations are unique and that you must assess the risk and safety factors that pertain to you and your household.

We are maintaining our commitment to livestreaming and virtual worship services for all.

If you are experiencing any symptoms or simply feeling unwell in general, please stay home.

If you have been in contact with people who possibly could have exposed you to the virus, please stay home until you are sure you will not pass anything on to anyone else. It is recommended this period be two weeks.

COVID-19 is impacting people of all ages. However, these factors are known to increase vulnerability to COVID-19:

- Age (People over 65)
- Residing in a long-term care facility
- Underlying medical conditions (especially if not well controlled)
- Immune-compromising conditions (cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplants, immune deficiencies, various diseases, etc.)
- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Pulmonary disease
- Moderate to severe asthma
- Chronic kidney disease (undergoing dialysis)

- Liver disease
- Pregnancy

On the other hand, some factors are protective and likely to reduce risk of acquiring a new COVID-19 infection. Those who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and those who have had documented COVID-19 infection and recovered have substantial protection against acquiring a new COVID-19 infection. However, there is much that remains unknown, including to what degree such protection reduces risk of transmitting the SARS-CoV-2 virus, how long COVID-19 immunity will last, and to what degree people who are immunized to SARS-CoV-2 might be susceptible to new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. – **Added 3/9/21**

FPCE Precautions

Practice Good Hygiene

Remember to practice good hygiene by using hand sanitizer and/or washing your hands frequently. Hand sanitizer is liberally placed throughout the narthex and sanctuary. Hand washing is most effective when done with ample soap and warm water for 20 seconds.

Face Masks

In accordance with the Center for Disease Control, Snohomish County Health Department, the Governor's guidelines and recommendations from the Northwest Coast Presbytery, properly worn face masks (covering nose and mouth) are required before, during and after the worship service.

Contact Tracing – More details later in this document

1. Attendance at each service will be recorded.
2. Pastor Alan will report any issue to the Snohomish Health District.
3. Steve Hammond is the contact for questions regarding COVID-19. He can be reached at hammondgsteven@gmail.com; cell 425-879-1397.

Environment

Weather permitting the doors and windows to the sanctuary will remain open to provide air circulation.

Cleaning

Frequently used surfaces (pews, doorknobs, tables, etc.) will be disinfected each week along with the regular cleaning of the church. There is hand sanitizer and wipes available throughout our building.

Social Distancing

Please practice social distancing while in the building by keeping a minimum of 6 feet between people from different households. Some pews will be roped off to provide social distancing while in worship. Members of the same households may sit together. Otherwise, we ask you sit in the outlined portion of an open pew.

Entrances

The Rockefeller entrance will be the entry point for worship. If you have mobility issues, then please use the ramp to the south Bell Tower doors. We will have greeters/ushers when we reopen, both at the main Rockefeller doors and stationed close to the Bell Tower doors.

We will use the Rockefeller doors to enter the church building on Sunday mornings. Anyone entering the building at any time for any reason will be required to sign-in. This is to assist tracking attendance for each Sunday. This also limits the areas people frequent and that will need to be monitored and disinfected.

Time

The sanctuary will open at 9:30am and close by 11:30am. Virtual Coffee Time and Sunday school begins at 11:30am on the Zoom platform. Resumption of office and staff hours will be gradual and will be posted when plans and procedures are set.

FPCE Worship Reopening Steps

Step 1 – No-In Person Worship

The sanctuary is closed for in-person worship. Our worship, fellowship, and discipleship activities take place virtually on our social media feeds. This step began after worship on Sunday March 15th.

Step 2 – Studio Audience

The sanctuary will be open for up to 30 people to attend worship. There will be an online RSVP process for us to monitor numbers and keep a record for tracing purposes. All members and frequent attenders at worship will be asked to sign a Covenant of Care to be filed in the office. This Covenant of Care can be found on our website and we will have copies at the doors before worship. Anyone entering the building will be checked off the RSVP list or required to sign-in. We will accommodate persons who did not RSVP only if there is room. Otherwise, those individuals will be put on the worship list for the upcoming week.

We will have a table in the back of the sanctuary with a one-use paper bulletin and a collection plate for offerings. Please use pre-marked seating in the pews. We ask for all to maintain a 6-foot social distance, and there is hand sanitizer readily available.

During Step 2, all attending will follow these guidelines:

1. Everyone is required to wear a face mask covering their nose and mouth.
2. Seating is limited. We will leave three to five ‘spaces’ free in the RSVP process for walk up or visitor seating. **Updated 3/9/21**
3. There will be no congregational singing of hymns. This continues to be consistent with WA State’s requirements. **Updated 3/9/21**
4. There will be no choir. To be consistent with WA State, we will use solos, duets, and quartets for worship. **Updated 3/9/21**
5. There will be no touching during the passing of the peace.
6. We will not formally celebrate the Lord’s Supper.
7. Facility use is limited to the sanctuary only. There will be no in-person coffee time, Sunday school, children’s ministry, or nursery. All children are welcome and encouraged to sit/be with their family.
8. The main entrance for worship is through the Rockefeller doors with mobility access by the south Bell Tower doors.
9. Doors will open at 9:30am and the building will close by 11:30am.
10. Virtual worship, our Zoom coffee time and Sunday school will continue as scheduled.

Please note, our numbers and our process will be flexible. We will prayerfully work to respect state, county, city, and Presbytery requirements and adjust for demand and safety. We will evaluate weekly and adjust. In time, we will slowly increase numbers toward Step 3.

Step 3 – Limited Seating

Our sanctuary has a large enough footprint to allow up to 70 people in worship. This metric is based on the square footage model advanced by our presbytery. Greeters will welcome worshippers through the Rockefeller door. We will continue an online reservation form and weekly sign-in procedures to maintain a trackable list of those attending each week. Face masks will be worn throughout the service, social distancing maintained, and seating in designated spaces only. There may come a point when singing of hymns, with face masks on, will be allowed, subject to government and Presbytery permission and approval of the FPCE Session.

During this step:

1. We will follow all procedures in Step 2.
2. Individual communion cups will be available to take home after worship on communion Sundays.

Step 4 – Open Seating

When our county is approved for Phase 4, then FPCE will resume regular worship in a safe manner with attention to accessibility, sanitization, and hospitality.

The Following Precautions Will Be in Place Until Further Notice

Closed Areas

For the time being, Westminster Hall, the Chapel, Calvin Lounge, the second-floor classrooms, the elevator, and office level are closed. Bathrooms are available for use on the main level and will be clearly marked. The nursery is closed. Families are encouraged to sit with each other in worship. There is a changing table in the unisex bathroom on the main level and infants can be nursed in Calvin Lounge.

Signing In for Contact Tracing Purposes

Anyone entering the building at any time will be required to sign-in. Please stay home if feeling sick or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19. Reservations via our online portal will help in this endeavor for worship, but as of October 1, 2020 all individuals will need to record their presence in our facility on a sign-in sheet located at one of two locations: entry from the Rockefeller doors or at the office door.

Bulletins

A limited set of one-use paper bulletins will be on a table in the back of the sanctuary for individual pick up. Each week an electronic version of the bulletin in PDF format will be available on FPCE website and app. Please feel free to download the file to your device to follow along at church or print it at home.

Passing the Peace

We will practice non-physical ways of passing the peace, whether through hand gestures, spoken words or sign language.

Children's Ministry

Children will stay in the pews under the supervision of their parents/guardians. Children's church is suspended.

Offering

Offering plates will no longer be passed through the pews to receive the weekly offering. A collection plate is located at the back of the sanctuary into which people may give their offering before or after worship. Alternatively, online giving and mail in offering are available options. We will have a moment in the service to give thanks and praise for God's provision for us as individuals and as a congregation.

Communion

Communion is suspended in worship. We are evaluating pre-packaged communion and will continue to lead virtual communion, but traditional communion will be reinstated only in Step 4.

Greeting the Congregation

Pastor Alan needs to leave quickly after worship to assist in our zoom coffee time and Sunday school. If you would like to visit with him, please schedule a call with Pastor Alan by contacting him via email (dorway@firstpreschurch.com).

Coffee Time and other Food Services

We are suspending Coffee Time, bake sales, cook offs, and any gatherings around food (such as potlucks). We understand this is an important aspect of being the church family, but for the time being, we are suspending these activities in accordance with Presbytery guidelines.

Continuation of Online Worship

The worship service will continue to be broadcast via livestreaming on Facebook and linking all videos to our website, app, and YouTube channel.

Contact Tracing

Should a congregant receive a positive COVID-19 test result, the following steps will take place:

1. Attendance at each service will be recorded.
2. Pastor Alan will report this to the Snohomish Health District.
3. The main office will compile a binder where all attendance and sign-in lists are stored.
4. Steve Hammond is the contact for questions regarding COVID-19. He can be reached at hammondgsteven@gmail.com; cell 425-879-1397.
5. Each household in attendance at the services where the congregant was possibly contagious will be notified by the office staff of the exposure risk.
6. The people in each household will be encouraged to monitor their own health, limit exposure to others, quarantine for two weeks, and seek medical attention should symptoms develop.

Should a person become ill or develop symptoms while in attendance.

1. Isolate the individual in Calvin Lounge.
2. Assess the situation and get medical help, if needed.
3. Encourage people in attendance to monitor their health, limit exposure to others and seek medical attention should symptoms develop.
4. Keep in contact with the individual and communicate with those in attendance results of any COVID-19 test results.

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens if I am just over the allowable attendance requirement?

An usher will thank you for attending and add your name to the attendance sheet for the upcoming week of worship. We ask for flexibility, understanding, humor, and knowing you are first on the list, just for next week.

What happens if I do not want to wear a face mask?

During this COVID-19 pandemic, we require a face mask covering one's nose and mouth while in the building. Worship leaders will ask you to respect our policy as you enter our sanctuary. There will be reminders during worship to keep face masks on in the sanctuary. We understand minor slips and we will ask to please keep face masks properly worn. If there is continued defiance, then you will be asked to leave and we will evaluate whether or not to continue with in person worship. We understand wearing face masks may not feel like worship, but worship is bigger than our needs and wants.

What happens if I decide to sing in church no matter what?

Worship leaders will ask you to respect our policy as you enter our sanctuary. There will be reminders during worship to enjoy the solo singing of our hymns. If there is defiance, then you will be asked to leave and we will evaluate whether or not to continue with in-person worship. We understand not singing may not feel like worship, but again, worship is bigger than our needs and wants.

Worship is removing idols of things and self that separate us from Jesus. Worship calls our attention to the grace and salvation plan of God alone. This inspires us to humbly open our lives to the Spirit's redemption and seek God's kingdom now. Worship incorporates stillness, confession, prayer, forgiveness, joy, peace, and listening with an open heart, not just singing. Worship is corporate and done with our neighbors' presence and feelings in mind, as together we are the body of Christ.

Do I really need to sit in outlined seating?

Yes. Families that come together can sit together. Let's face it, Presbyterians rarely like to sit too close to each other and never sit in the front, so we are only helping the entire community with this request.

What happens if I need to stretch my legs or use the restroom during worship?

Then please use the clearly marked bathrooms on the main level. We ask you to not wander in the building so that we can keep our facility clean and ready as we adjust for more use in the future.

What are the expectations for Pastor Alan, Steve Torrence, Gary Norris, and those who may sing?

All worship leaders will wear masks before, during and after worship. We will be creating appropriate distance for the solo leading of hymns and special music, in accord with current government and Presbytery regulation and approval by the FPCE Session. We will maintain proper social distancing for the leaders of worship during the service. Any change in procedures will depend on current governmental and Presbytery regulation and approval of the FPCE Session.

What do I do with my children?

Children are welcome to join in worship and sit with you through the service. We do not recommend coffee for them prior to worship, but being bribed with donuts after service may be an effective way to motivate children to get moving in the morning.

How can I be creative in passing the peace?

Learn sign language. We will pass the peace verbally. Yet, sign language, waving of hands, the action of blowing kisses, air hugs, or being creative in ways to maintain proper social distance are all great ways to share peace with others.

Really, no communion and choir?

Yes. We will experiment with prepackaged communion sets to be picked up after worship on communion Sundays to take home. We will explore possibilities for including a small choir, in accord with current regulations and Session approval, as circumstances and resources permit.

Will keeping our virtual worship experience going affect in person worship?

No. There will be a camera that Pastor Alan addresses specifically to make sure we keep our congregation at home engaged and valued in worship. Livestreaming and video recording have become and will stay a vital part of our witness.

How do I know the sanctuary is clean?

After worship by 11:30am, our sanctuary will be closed for public use. No other groups or events will take place in the sanctuary. This allows us to clean and prepare the space without interruption for the next week.

What if I need to drop something off at the office?

Please mail it in as staff comes at various and limited times throughout the week. You can put envelopes in the offering plate that will also be transported to the office. Our office is closed and will reopen later.

What if I need to check something for my group in the building?

Our building is closed for public use. Our session is gradually considering and reopening parts of the building on a case-by-case basis. Currently, no church groups have been approved to meet. However, Esther's Place, Dinner at the Bell, and the Everett Cooperative Preschool have fulfilled compliance requirements to be in limited operation in specified facility restricted areas through Session approved building use agreements.

When will I be able to get a book from our church library?

We are not sure. The library will be part of the office and general building use to gradually reopen. Our library is awesome, but we continue to ask for patience.

What happens if I or another person at worship finds out we are sick or have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19?

If you test positive for COVID-19, then please contact Pastor Alan (office 425-259-7139 ext. 2) immediately. First, we want to pray for you. You are important and our church wants to pray, send encouraging notes, and embrace you with love. Second, we ask you to stay home and monitor your health according to your doctor's plan. We support your healing process. Lastly, we will follow our procedures. This involves notifying others in worship they may have been exposed and giving our list to the county for contact tracing purposes. There is no blame or shame, but knowing and getting ahead of the curve allows for better health for all.

If another person in worship is diagnosed with a positive COVID-19 test, then we will let you know. This is part of contact tracing. You will need to evaluate your risks and health. The county asks you to quarantine immediately for two weeks. You may need to contact your doctor for best practices and schedule appropriate tests and monitoring.

If I and the members of my household attending services have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have recovered from documented COVID-19 illness, do the rules on masking, social distancing, etc. apply to me/us?

Yes, all rules regarding management of risk of spreading COVID-19 apply to all attendees, regardless of whether you have been vaccinated against COVID-19 or have recovered from COVID-19 illness.

Approval Process

Session Approved Initial Plan 9/1/20

Submitted to the Northwest Coast Presbytery 9/2/20

Presbytery Returned with Notes 9/4/20

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Presbytery Affirmed 10/6/20

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