

\*UPDATE ADDED\*

May 30, 2020

To the First Presbyterian Church of Everett,

On Friday May 22<sup>nd</sup>, President Trump announced churches and worship are essential to the health of our nation. On Wednesday May 27<sup>th</sup>, Governor Inslee clarified what church gatherings could look like in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of our state's reopening plan. Currently, Snohomish County is in Phase 1 and our Presbytery has not changed the suspension of face to face worship. Our session has maintained compliance with state, local, and presbytery guidelines. We are being cautious and moving slowly as our desire is to provide a safe, joyous and celebratory time when we are able to resume worshipping together.

The First Presbyterian Church of Everett is not opening at this time. We will let our congregation know many weeks ahead of time whenever the opening date will be. We will continue to provide on-line worship and have scheduled safe and socially distanced appropriate activities to provide for community.

We know this is a difficult time. You are being prayed for and please continue to pray for our leadership and the health of our city, state, and nation. We are unified in Christ. I humbly ask we hold on to unity and love as we navigate every twist and turn of this moment. Our faith, our walk with Jesus has never been unessential.

Peace,



Rev. Dr. Alan Dorway

The 2020 Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Everett

To the First Presbyterian Church of Everett,

Put your hand up in the air and give yourself a high five! We have navigated this time well. Sure, we're all getting stir crazy, but we are learning about who we are. We stay connected by picking up the phone and calling family, friends, and neighbors to check in and say hello. We have chosen to love our neighbor by wearing masks, washing hands, and respecting boundaries for others. We crush Zoom meetings, have learned new platforms for worship, and figured out waking up, caring for our children, working from home, while balancing a need to go outside. Plus we've laughed, juggled birthdays and celebrations, and done this with an open heart. I pray for you every day and am grateful to serve as your pastor.

Our session meets weekly to check in, do business, and prepare for reopening our sanctuary. In the phased opening plan for our state, the earliest we will be able to gather will be in Phase 3. We do not know when that phase will be official and even then, we want to be cautious, slow, and prepared to allow for a joyous and safe worship experience. We continue to follow the guidelines from the state, county, and our presbytery.

We have not been resting. Thank you for returning the digital survey. More are coming in and this information is extremely helpful for our staff. Our deacons are doing a great job and are here to talk with and encourage you. Our Facilities Committee through Laura Little has worked to keep our church grounds looking great, painted the office hallway and bathrooms, and recently finished a project to paint the Stocker Alley wall. If you are out on a drive, then drive through the alley to see our new, clean blue wall. We are getting projects done!

Our session thanks you for being generous in your giving. This is a tough financial climate, but giving has been steady. Yes, giving has declined overall, but there's been an uptick in online giving as well as faithful offerings coming by mail. These gifts sustain our ministry, thank you.

I want to tell you about a group that was planning an event in September. This group was going to bring different service providers together for families to access or learn about opportunities for help. I met with their leaders and we thought how to use inside and outside spaces to host 200+ people. Due to current health concerns, they are not able to have this event in 2020. Yet, they had submitted a deposit of \$50. Rather than ask for it back, they sent a gracious email thanking us for working with them, hoping to do their event in 2021, and donated their deposit. Yes, it is a small donation, but this is an example of how we use the gift of our building to bless our community and how in return groups care for and support us.

I believe God is working in amazing ways and inviting us to join. This is a great time for us to put into practice some of those resolutions or wishes for our relationship with Jesus. We are home, maybe we add regular scripture reading. We're not rushing into the office, maybe we have an extra moment to pray. We may find we are experiencing peace and able to laugh more without the stress of a 'get it done now' environment. The Holy Spirit could be calling us to engage in a new adventure in faith because we have time to reflect on it rather than get excited on a Sunday and hit Monday running in the regular world. I'm not sure if there is a 'normal'. Or at least, I don't believe we should be clamoring to get back to former normal or defining a new normal. God is doing a new thing in our world, church, and hearts. It could be scary, but we have a chance to use this time to set up practices and spaces to be renewed by Christ. That's exciting!

Lastly, you will be receiving a 'Quarantine Care Package' in the mail early next week. I hope you enjoy and participate in some of the activities we have planned. Remember, you are loved by God, by our congregation, our leadership, and me. We are not alone.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rev. Dr. Alan Dorway

The 2020 Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Everett