

11-16-20 COVID-19 Response Letter

This coming Sunday is Christ the King Sunday. It is the last Sunday of the church year, when we celebrate the reign of Jesus. As we look around at what we see in the world we wonder, is Christ really king?

COVID-19 continues to surge through our community. In September, Sara, Rebecca, and I had it along with others from our church and staff. Every week I continue to hear of others we know and love who contract the virus. While many have come through their experience to the other side generally ok, others have been significantly impacted.

My heart breaks for the suffering we are experiencing from this. Sara and I have now participated in two funerals as a result of the virus. We pray for friends who are in the hospital, living in isolation, or are struggling to fully recover. Additionally, we think of the turmoil and uncertainty children and families are experiencing as businesses and schools continually adapt, trying to keep people safe while still engaging in important work.

In response to our governor's proclamation on Monday evening, November 16th, I would like to keep you informed about our ministry and what we are currently doing to keep doing the important work God calls us to do while maintaining safety protocols.

Regarding Sunday worship services, we continue with our 8:45am in-person service. We are asking all people to wear masks, and continue maintaining social distance practices. We are continuing to offer monthly communion and sing during the service, while we seek to keep the service as touchless as possible. We are also continuing with our 10:30 am online livestream service. You can participate in this service on our church Facebook and YouTube pages. www.fpcfd.org has all the links you need to find these pages.

We currently are planning three in-person **Christmas Eve services** for December 24th – 10am in the Sanctuary, 4pm in the Christian Life Center, and 7pm in the Sanctuary. All three of these services will have childcare available, and will include candle lighting. We will also livestream the 7pm service to our Facebook and YouTube pages. We will require masks and social distancing so that we can sing and include many of the elements we normally find so meaningful at this sacred time. We will make sure that worship spaces and materials are properly cleaned for all services. *To that end, we are only prepared to have 100 people in each service. Please RSVP through the church office, website or <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4AA9A82CA1FDC16-christmas> so we can adequately plan and plan more services if needed.*

Our office remains open and we would happily meet with anybody by appointment. If you do come to the office, please come through the north (Commons) entrance.

Children's and youth programs are meeting in small groups so that we can continue to gather together in person, provided that each person is masked. We will inform you if we need to make any changes to these programs in the coming weeks.

KidZone is still open and operates with its same drop-off and pick-up procedures. All staff wear masks and children wear masks as they are able.

Committee, board, and staff meetings continue within the church, in hybrid format – some are via zoom while others are in person with proper social distancing.

In addition to Christmas Eve, **mark your calendars for Sunday, December 20th**. We are still planning for a Christmas Music Special that day in our worship services, even though it will look different from previous years. You'll hear more about that in coming weeks.

We read in Philippians 2 that Jesus, although he is God, took on the form of a human being, and emptied himself, giving his life as a ransom for many. Jesus is King. He is sovereign over all creation. Yet, in some mysterious way, he also suffers alongside us, even on our behalf.

As we enter into the season of Advent, we are reminded that not only do we wait to once again to celebrate Jesus' birth, but we continue awaiting Jesus' second coming when all things will be made anew. In the meantime, we co-labor with Christ, working to usher in his new kingdom. So we serve others, mourning with those who mourn, living with humility, and reminding people of the hope we have in things to come. Jesus' light does shine in the darkness. Christ is present. Christ is at work among us. And we know how the story ends.

Blessings,
Austin D. Hill
Lead Pastor