

## **FUMC IN-PERSON REOPENING PLANS**

**As of 8/20/20**

I'd like to give you an update today regarding where our church is with regards to re-entering our sanctuary for activities, small groups and worship. Our plans have been approved by the District Superintendent but they are contingent on Nevada state guidelines and protocols as well as CDC and Annual Conference protocols. At any time if state imposes limitations upon us, I will act accordingly to close the church once more.

I'll start with large group Activities, then small groups, then in person worship and finally how to register for worship.

Let's start with activities. We are still under Phase two in the state which means any room in the church can only have 50% of its people capacity in said room. There has to be room for social distancing or 6 feet between people. We are still not allowed to have large group activities within our church. This means no dinners, fellowship hour activities, Vacation Bible School, until we move to different phases. So for now, no big group activities will be allowed. When we get to Phase 3, big group activities will be decided on a case by case basis.

### **SMALL GROUPS**

Let's talk small groups. We are opening up for small groups to meet in the Wesley room and downstairs for meetings on September 1<sup>st</sup>. While we are very happy to have you meet in our buildings, we ask that you follow the rules. There are state required restrictions that the church must follow right now.

1. Someone from your group must attend a Cleaning and Sanitizing meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 26 at 4 pm in the Wesley Room or wait another month before a second one will be held. You must attend this meeting before you meet. This training will explain your group's regular responsibility for cleaning and sanitizing your part in the room.
2. Chairs must be set 6 feet apart at all times.
3. Groups can only have 50% of the people capacity in the space in which you meet.
4. Masks must be worn throughout the entire meeting and that means keeping them on over your mouth and nose for the entire time. Bring extras for others

who forget or you will need to send them home. If someone is sick or becomes sick, you must ask them to go home.

5. Call Pam in the office to set up your dates.

Failure to comply with any of these rules means your group will not be allowed to meet in the building.

## **WORSHIP**

And now let's talk in person worship. We are almost ready to open one in person worship service and have scheduled September 27 as the date. This will give the church time to look at what is happening once schools open and whether as the Carson City community we can handle this challenge of keeping Covid surges down.

10:30 am will be the time for this first in person service. Online worship will move back to 9:00 am. Why? Because there is more clean up after an in person worship service than an online one so we're moving times around to accommodate time for the ushers to doing their cleaning.

The two tasks we are currently working on that have to be completed also before we open. One task is finding another 3 ushers for the in person service. If you wish to volunteer, please call and leave me a message in the office or call my cell phone. There will be a training involved.

The second task we need to complete is to mark off the sidewalk in front of the Musser and Division street doors so that you know where 6 feet of distancing actually is. We're finishing those up pronto.

Just like small groups, we have rules we have to follow from the Conference and Nevada state protocols. As I am under the authority of the Bishop, I must follow them to the best of our ability to do so.

## **COMING TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP**

6. When you arrive for worship, you can enter either door. We will however keep the door to the dumpster in the little alleyway, locked. Line up on the markers for social distancing. An usher will greet you but not shake your hand. Just nod your heads to each other and give verbal greetings.

7. Ushers will take your temperature and it must be below the required 100.4 in order to enter the sanctuary. If you have a temperature, you will be escorted to the Jordan Room until everyone is in the sanctuary and then you can go home.
8. Bring a mask to wear at all times during worship. You must wear it over your mouth and nose at all times. Please don't put the ushers in the place of having to come over and tell you to do this. If you cannot breathe through a mask right now, then you need to stay home and celebrate with us during online worship a little longer.
9. An usher will escort you to a pew. Please do not fight with the usher as they have to seat people so that social distancing between non family units is kept. Family units are those with whom you have been sheltering and trust that they will not give you the virus. So friends might be among them. You'll need to arrive together so that the usher knows to seat you together. People will sit in every other pew at opposite ends of the pew depending on family size.
10. At the end of worship, you will be released to leave by an usher. Just remain seated until someone tells you that you can leave. Again, the ushers are trying to keep everyone safe.
11. Restrooms are open and please notice that we have new touchless faucets and soap dispensers in place in every bathroom so please try not to touch them. Just place your hands underneath and wait for the flow to occur.

## **DURING WORSHIP**

Let's talk about what happens during worship. Protocols from the Conference were tested in some churches and this is what will happen when you experience in person worship right now.

1. You must wear a mask over your mouth and nose the whole time in worship. If you cannot do so because of breathing issues, we ask that you stay at home for online worship for now.
2. There will be nothing to hold. No bulletins. No prayer cards. No praises and concerns cards. No hymnals. Everything will be on the screen. No hugs, no handshakes, no touching of any kind. No passing of the peace. Well that might not be quite true. I have a way of doing it that lets us remain in place while turning around and acknowledging others without touching them. I'll teach it to you.

3. There won't be any offering plates either. If you bring an offering, there will be a box on the table in the Aldersgate room where you can leave it. But it's much better to send or bring in your offering to the office right now. Remember anything we all touch, the ushers have to sanitize afterwards.
4. There won't be any live music because singing sends our spicules, a fancy word for spit, twice to three times as far as speaking does. So all music will be recorded. The band is experimenting with playing in the Wesley room during worship and using a camera to bring the sound to us. But we've just started working on that project. We'll keep you posted. The choir probably won't be back in worship until there is a safe vaccine. We'll still be showing videos of our musicians in worship from time to time.
5. Sadly, none of us can sing during this in person worship either. I'll miss that personally. I love to sing. But we can listen to the music and we can hum and we can clap. We can even stand and sway to it if we'd like. We can't even do a Call to Worship together. So there will be some changes.
6. For prayers, I'll still need you to text me or leave a message the day before so I can lift up your praises and concerns, ok? I can't encourage you to speak at worship and you cannot leave note at the pulpit either. And since we have the online service first, I can always announce those at the in person worship so that we stay connected to each other.
7. There won't be any nursery either. If you bring children, you'll be expected to take care of them.
8. Please know that we will still be able to do the sacraments of baptism and communion. In fact, I believe we will have a baptism of an infant that very first Sunday. Communion will still be the first of every month.

I've tried to describe what in person will be like for awhile until a vaccine is here and enough people have taken it. Worship will not be what it was when we were in the sanctuary last March. In fact, the Bishop suggests it will feel more like a meditative service. There will be meaningful music, there will be a witness to the word, there will be videos of our members answering questions. And there will be the power of the Holy Spirit working through us at all times. We must lean on God now even as worship changes. God will not.

## **REGISTERING FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP**

So finally let's talk how to register for worship. Despite our congregational survey, it is just not possible to know what each of you is thinking about the return to in person worship. You have to feel safe and ready. And please do not make fun of someone who chooses not to return immediately. We don't know their particular circumstances and there may be very good reasons for their delay in coming back. I don't want the fight over how to handle coronavirus to be an issue in our church. Leave the arguing at home and come with an open heart to the love of God for each and everyone of us no matter what we believe.

So, to register for in person worship, we have decided simply to let you call the office to sign up for coming to worship. Each Monday you can begin calling to reserve your own place or a place for your family once the office is open at 9:00am. We think we can seat between 30-40 people each Sunday depending on the make up of single people and families. If we go over our capacity, your name will automatically go over to the following week's worship service and we will ask you if you can attend that one.

You may leave an after hours message on Mon, Tues, and Wed nights to register. Thursdays we will call you to confirm your presence at worship IF you have left us a phone number to call. If you do not leave a number, we cannot confirm you. If you do not have a confirmation by Thursday afternoon, you cannot come to worship so please check your phones. Calling on Fridays is too late. And please do not call Sunday night and leave a message to reserve a place. We won't count those. Reservations start Monday when the office opens. Let's make this a fair process for all. Ushers will have these names on a list on Sunday morning so please don't try to crash the worship service without a reservation. New people who arrive will automatically get their names on the list for the following week. Unless someone out there has a better idea. If you do, please don't hesitate to let me know.

And finally we live in uncertain times. All of this could change in a heartbeat within a month's time so keep your eyes and ears open to that possibility. And check your the newsletter, worship announcements and the Thursday updates and the church's website.