

June 3, 2020

First Reformed Church Family,

Over the past several weeks the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant changes in how we have been able to worship. It was *painful* to close down the church building and ask you to worship from home! The Church leadership and staff have worked diligently to allow all of us to worship from our homes, but our hearts yearn for the time when we can start worshipping together again. In April, FRC developed a committee to work with the Consistory on developing a plan and timeline for re-opening FRC. This FRC Wellness Committee includes Deb Locker, Shari Baker, Tamara Breen, Les Douma, Arlo Van Beek, Galen Kleinwolterink and Barry Brandt. The committee has met weekly during May to help accomplish this goal.

Why we closed the church:

COVID-19 is a new disease with no preventative vaccine or defined treatment. In order to best learn about the disease and health factors resulting from it we have used the CDC (Center for Disease Control), IDPH (Iowa Department of Public Health), and Sioux County Community Health Partners as resources to help guide and direct our decision making process. Reports and ensuing Proclamations from the Governor of Iowa have also set guidelines which we are directed to follow.

Factors to consider as we re-open the church:

We have learned that COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that is primarily spread from person to person in respiratory droplets that are spread through coughing, sneezing or talking to someone who is 6 feet or less from you. You can also contract it by touching a surface with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. **The only effective methods of preventing the development and spread of this virus involve “social distancing practices”.** *Based on what we now know, those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are as follows:*

- **People who are 65 or older**

**People of all ages who have underlying medical conditions** such as:

- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions
- People who are immunocompromised (e.g., cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplant, immune deficiencies, and prolong use of corticosteroids or other immune weakening medications).
- People with severe obesity (Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease (undergoing dialysis)
- People with liver disease

This list is NOT meant to be all inclusive, but rather to help guide in decision making.

The Wellness Committee, Consistory and Staff are doing everything we can to provide a safe environment as we start gathering together again for worship. **Our timeline and plan is outlined on the back side of this page.** Please read it carefully and think it through! We hope it will help you decide when you feel that you can safely return to worship and also outline the protocol we encourage you to abide by when you do return. The decision of whether or not to attend onsite church services is yours and we understand that. The heart of this plan is safety for all!

*These have been challenging times, and the Consistory and Staff are so very thankful for your patience, support and encouragement during this time. Unity of Spirit is a beautiful thing and we are so appreciative of how you have handled this whole time of major adjustments! We continue to ask for your patience and support as we “GO BACK TO CHURCH”!*

## TIMELINE: Sunday Church Services in June:

**June 7<sup>th</sup>** - *We will be conducting a "Pilot Service" at 9:30 AM.* This service will include the Pastors, the Praise Team and Sound Booth crew. Also invited to attend (if they so desire) will be the Consistory members, Church Staff and their families. This service will be broadcast live on all our media outlets. *Those attending this service will be asked to follow the protocol we are proposing for services we plan to offer the rest of June.* If this protocol goes well, we will be offering the following schedule:

**June 14<sup>th</sup>** – *Two services will be held* (this is necessary for us to allow all our congregation the opportunity to worship on Sunday and still be able to maintain suggested occupancy and spacing guidelines for large gatherings). *Both services will be broadcast "live" on all of our media outlets (except the radio service on KSOU will be broadcast at 9:30 as usual)!* **The first service will start at 8:30 AM and we are suggesting that those with last names beginning in letters A through K plan to attend this service. The second service will begin at 10:45 AM and we are suggesting that those with last names beginning in letters L through Z plan to attend this service. PLEASE KNOW that if you want to attend at a different time than suggested, we are fine with that, and we have made contingency plans with that possibility in mind.** After these services we will evaluate the outcome and hope to continue this meeting plan through **June 21 and June 28.**

**PROTOCOL-** *These guidelines will be under the direction of the "Health & Hospitality Team" who will wear blue lanyards.*

- **We strongly suggest that people 65 and older watch from home.** You are the group most at risk and we are genuinely concerned about the increased risk to your health in a group setting such as this.
- **We ask that anyone who has any symptoms of illness PLEASE STAY HOME!** Also, if you know that you have been exposed to anyone who has been ill or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, **PLEASE STAY HOME!**
- We ask you to enter **only** through the North and South Canopy doors (The West door will be an **exit only**).
- We will have sanitizer stations outside both doors and the entry doors will be braced open.
- **We suggest, but not require, that people wear masks.** Masks will be available for those who do not have them.
- **There will be NO Nursery or Sunday School.** If you need to leave the sanctuary during the service, you may go to the hallway by the nursery or to the Loft. We ask you to please practice social distancing while in these areas.
- We will have social distancing lines marked by the sanitizer stations and will provide guidance to control the flow through these stations and into the church.
- We will need to keep the flow of people moving in order to practice good social distancing. There will be ushers to greet people and guide them to the doors leading into the sanctuary.
- We will be using only the North, South and Center doors into the sanctuary.
- There will be ushers to greet people at the sanctuary doors and guide them to a seat.
- **If you desire to have coffee at church, you will need to bring your own coffee in your own container.**
- The restrooms will be available but we discourage usage of them.
- The library, kitchen, fellowship area, south wing and basement will be closed.
- The first 3 rows in the Sanctuary will be kept empty for Praise Team purposes.
- There will be two empty rows between each occupied row and ushers will remind people of different groupings to sit 6 feet apart in the pews.
- If more people than expected show up, we will have an overflow area set up in the north end of the fellowship hall by the big screen to accommodate them.
- At the end of the service we will usher people out of the sanctuary. (Please pick up after yourself.)
- We will have people assigned to keep the flow moving toward the exits as they leave the sanctuary.
- We will have crews to clean all areas that will be used before the first service and between services.

We are aware that this process seems sterile and impersonal. We sincerely wish that we did not have to be so structured, but in order to offer a relatively safe environment to all who attend, this is what we need to do right now. We will miss some of the fellowship, but there will still be some personal interaction AND we will be able to worship together in the House of the Lord!!

Barry Brandt  
Executive Director