**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE – May 26, 2020**

**REOPENING WORSHIP, ROUND 2**

Florida is now in what it describes as full Phase One as to reopening from the coronavirus lockdown. Under the lockdown, churches were defined as essential businesses, but expected to follow CDC social distancing guidelines, including gatherings of ten people or less.

Under Phase One, churches are not specifically addressed (as far as I can tell), but this is what Florida’s Plan says about social gatherings:

All individuals should continue to maximize physical distance from others in public,

particularly in enclosed environments. Individuals should avoid socializing in groups of

more than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate social

distancing of at least 6 feet.

This is in addition to advice that people in vulnerable populations (underlying conditions) continue to stay at home as much as possible (Page 22, [Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. PLAN FOR FLORIDA’S RECOVERY](https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/covid19/Taskforce%20Report.pdf)).

The above language about “circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate social

distancing of at least 6 feet” appears to offer some options for businesses like churches to have more than 10 people present for a gathering. However, as earlier updates have pointed out, sessions need to assess the risk for the congregation’s membership along with the ability to provide an environment that people believe is safe.

We have heard some reports of sessions considering some form of “soft” reopening of in-person worship and other ministries in early- to mid-June. This will likely become more pronounced when Florida moves to Phase Two of reopening, which says the following about social gatherings:

Individuals and businesses should adhere to all public guidance by federal, state and local

officials, including state regulatory agencies.

* Individuals should avoid socializing in groups of more than 50 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate social distancing of at least 6 feet. (Ibid., page 26)

When your session makes a decision that changes your current worship strategy, please remember to tell the Presbytery Office by emailing Cheryl Carson, so we can update our listing of services.

**JUNE 4 PRESBYTERY MEETING**

Council decided last week that the Presbytery meeting on June 4 will be a virtual meeting instead of an in-person meeting at First Presbyterian Church, Sebastian. We are grateful for Sebastian’s willingness to host the meeting and regret that we will not be able to travel to Indian River County for this meeting.

The meeting will use the Zoom teleconferencing platform, which you can join either by computer or telephone. The packet of reports for the meeting was sent out last Friday, including information about joining the meeting. Please be advised of the following:

* You can join and participate in the meeting by telephone, but some of the options available for computer users may be limited on the phone.
* All users, especially Ruling Elder Commissioners and ministers will need to register for the meeting ahead of time. Once you register, you will receive the instructions (link) for joining the Zoom meeting.
* Please keep your device muted during the meeting unless you wish to speak. You can obtain the floor by using the raise hand function in Zoom. More than one person can use a computer in a shared location, but please do not use two computers in one location as this will cause feedback.
* We will designate some people as co-hosts for the meeting to assist in the smooth flow of the meeting. These people will have the ability to mute (and unmute) users as needed. People will also be designated and a contact number given to help people that are having issues getting connected with Zoom. An introduction to Zoom will be provided for participants new to the platform on Wednesday, June 3rd at 1:30 p.m. Contact Christina Greenawalt cgreenawalt@cfpresbytery.org for more information.
* As many votes as possible will be taken by general consent. The moderator will ask if there are any objections to the matter on the floor. Objections should be noted by the raised hand feature. If there are objections, the matter will be debated and voted on using the poll feature.
* Other votes will be taken by using the poll feature in Zoom, as well. The poll will be displayed and people will be asked to respond to the poll. We are studying how phone users can respond to polls, and how we deal with more than one voting member using only one computer.
* We hope this meeting will go smoothly, but if not, the presbytery will not be responsible if the loss of, or poor quality of, a member’s individual connection prevented him or her from participating in the meeting.

There is additional information, including special rules covering an electronic meeting, in the packet. Please review this information completely before the meeting begins. It can be downloaded at: <http://www.cfpresbytery.org/uploads/2/0/2/8/20282261/2005june_04_presbytery_packet.pdf>.

**VACATION TIME / TIME OFF**

Over the past two weeks, I have been asking pastors whether then feel they have been getting enough rest as they have dealt with the changes in routine brought on by the coronavirus. Not surprisingly, I have heard negative answers to this question more times than not. I want to encourage pastors to be diligent in carving out down time during this stressful period. Plan for and take some of your vacation time, as you ordinarily would as the summer months approach, even if it is for a “staycation.” Session members should make a point of making sure their pastor is taking this time, and should do their part to help carry the load of ministry. As was mentioned on the weekly check-in phone call, members of the Presbytery staff will be happy to substitute for a Sunday by providing an appropriate recorded sermon, or participating in a live-stream. Please call us to arrange for this as needed.

Also, please note that Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has resources on resilience training and emotional and spiritual care during disasters/pandemics on their [website](https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resources/list/?category=escare).

Dan Williams

Executive Presbyter / Stated Clerk