

Return to Church

Dear friends,

This is the heaviest burden of responsibility I have ever felt in my ministry. To guide me, I have relied upon the following:

- the collective wisdom of our pastoral staff and directors
- the information from the Episcopal office of the United Methodist Church,
- the COVID briefings from San Diego County and the Governor's office,
- as well as reports from the National Institute of Infectious Disease.

I have also looked to my faith as determined by my theological understanding of scripture. From these sources the following principles guided the development of this plan.

John Wesley's simple rules for life were to 1. Do no harm, 2. Do good, and 3. Stay in love with God.

- **Do no harm** means that this plan errs on the side of caution and calls to refrain from worshipping together in the sanctuary on Sunday morning until the final stage when large gatherings are permissible. It is not right, theologically or ethically, to be in a position to turn people away because of physical distancing requirements when they come to worship or to tempt those who are vulnerable to risk infection by being around others.
- **Do good** means that we will be innovative in creating opportunities to meet people's needs to be together, in the sanctuary and on campus, in smaller groups where precautions are enforced. We will keep in mind those who might be left behind and seek to accommodate training in technology and develop other means of connection.
- **Stay in love with God** means that we will continue to find ways to answer the call to be the church. We will model the sacrificial love of Christ, and set aside our deep desires to be together face-to-face in order to protect the most vulnerable. We will reach out to those who need us most even as we continue to develop relationships with those who need the good news we share. Our digital community through zoom meetings and studies and live-streaming worship will not only continue but be developed, nurtured and envisioned to something that extends well beyond the current situation.

This plan is detailed, not because it is clear and complete, as noted with the color green indicating **guidelines yet to be determined**. But because it captures some of our brainstorming for possibilities, as noted in red indicating **programs yet to develop**, and glimpses a path into a new future as noted in blue indicating **movement to support the vision of First Church**.

I realize the difficult part might be in assessing when to transition from one stage to the next. The process to determine when to make those transitions will be similar to the process that adopted this plan. First the pastors and directors of First Church weighed in, then presented their recommendation to the Church Council Leadership Team who perfected the plan, and finally it came before the Church Council for final approval. Ultimately, however, the final responsibility lies with the Lead Pastor, who according to the UM Book of Discipline (Paragraph 2533.1) "...The board of trustees shall have the supervision, oversight, and care of all real property owned by the local church ... The board of trustees shall not ... permit the use of said property for religious or other meetings without the consent of the pastor."

I pray for God to guide us to safer days, to heal the grief of our hearts over the loss of so many lives, to give us all the courage, patience and commitment to be safe for the sake of others, and to strengthen our faith so that we can be a faithful witness of hope for what God can do even in these days.

~ Rev. Trudy

Return to Church

Stage 1 (Present)

Indicator: Number of cases continue to rise, Lack of testing, Strain on hospitals

Church is closed.

Staff working from home.

Sanitizing: with a commercial grade disinfectant left on surfaces for 10 min, all door handles, light switches, alarm panels, and offices that have been occupied.
Bathrooms are being cleaned daily

Mandatory Precautions:

Wearing Masks whenever in public
Keeping at least 6' distance between people
Frequent hand-washing
Stay home if sick or exposed
Hand-sanitizers, tissue and trash cans easily accessible
Avoiding touching your face.

WORSHIP

No in-person gatherings
Same people presiding over services in person
Video-taped participants in the safety of their own homes

DEVOTION

No in-person gatherings
Zoom meetings for adult studies, children's and youth ministries, choir ministries
CGC is open for care of families of essential workers
Welcoming new members via zoom

COMPASSION

NLCC is open and offering counseling sessions
Grief Share via zoom meetings
Caring Hearts Ministries making phone calls
Social Media connections a priority
Mission Outreach Thrift Store Closed

JUSTICE

Contributed \$10K from the Easter Offering for San Diego Foundation Community Relief
Ocean Beach food bank operating
Wesley UMC food bank operating
Responding to Incidents
Providing opportunities for conversation

Measuring Attendance

Group leaders track attendance through Realm for all zoom meetings
Estimate viewership online

Measuring Effectiveness

Putting in place systems of care
Offering connection
Adapting programs to online forums
Survey online community

Return to Church

Stage 2

Indicator: Number of new cases is consistently declining. Hospitals are managing needs. Adequate supplies for safety can be obtained.

Scheduled Office Hours: to allow for thorough sanitization, with staff and hours staggered

Mandatory Precautions:

(added to those in Stage 1)

Employees trained on precautions and prevention plan

Provide gloves for certain tasks

Have masks available for all

Develop appropriate process to identify new cases of illness

Sanitize your own workstations throughout day at designated times

Temperatures taken remotely as staff and congregants enter

Limit restroom usage

Limit parking to allow for distancing

Restrictions: Those who are vulnerable due to other health restrictions, those who have been in contact with the virus and may be asymptomatic, and those who feel sick for any reason are encouraged to stay home. As much as we want to be with the youngest and the oldest among us, we ask that individuals and families use the wisest discretion in deciding whether or not to be physically present, knowing that the risk is greatest to them.

Abiding by these restrictions will be monitored.

“Rehearse” before welcoming people
i.e. case scenarios for enforcement

Consider including travel distance in guidelines, as well as level of potential outside contamination

WORSHIP

Worship remains live-streamed and on YouTube
More in-person participants in worship

i.e. Associate Pastor, Kenton, Liturgists,

Offer pre-recorded quartet anthems (w/ precautions)

Push Subscriptions to YouTube

Restroom availability and Child Care to be determined by staff capacity

DEVOTION:

Engage online community

Small groups of 10 or less.

Likely no Koinonia or Hearts of Christianity.

Physical space capacity will be altered to allow for physical distancing - minimum of 6 ft apart

Sanitization immediately after use: tables, plastic (not fabric) chairs, light switches, doors, counters, faucets.

Enter space through one door, out through another

Space usage and availability will be determined by custodial staff

Space usage will be scheduled with an hour between events using the same space to allow for air ventilation

Children and Youth:

Special programs and activities are provided for at home use.

Special gatherings of small groups possible.
No physical activity or singing

Zoom meetings continue for those who choose to remain at home.

Sanitization occurs immediately after space usage.

Develop small groups in neighborhoods with guidelines, goals, and facilitators

COMPASSION

In addition to continuing programs as in Stage 1

Mission Outreach Thrift Store open with limited shoppers following distance and mask guidelines

JUSTICE

Continued awareness of ways the church can serve the people in need in the larger community

Continuing programs as in Stage 1

Measuring Attendance

Same as stage 1.

How to better assess online viewing?

Measuring Effectiveness

Return visitors, Consistent participation

Volunteer engagement tracked through Realm

Return to Church

Stage 3

Indicator: Wide-spread testing is available, Community Tracing practiced.

Office Hours return to new normal

Mandatory Precautions: based on what's advised by medical profession

Restrictions: those who are vulnerable due to other health restrictions, and those who feel sick are encouraged to stay home and continue to worship with us online.

WORSHIP

Transition online service specifically for an online audience

Quartet offer music in-person for live-stream

Small communion and baptism services offered

Ticketed attendance, Invitation only, and Monitored first-come attendance determined by event.

If sign up for events is used, gather ICE info as signature declaring free of symptoms

Passive participants - no singing, reciting liturgy

Pews blocked off to allow 6 ft. distancing.

Allow 30' distance between pew/pulpit

Ushers monitor and dismiss by rows

Family seating allowed in marked off pews with greater distance from others

Remove everything in the pew backs i.e. hymnals, Bibles, pencil's, papers

Pews sprayed down immediately after each event.

No less than 30 minutes between events

Offering receptacles at the back of each transept the sanctuary

Continue to invite online giving, ACH, and text to give

Offering in worship becomes a celebration of what we are doing with people's generosity.

Fellowship Time before and after services is limited to safe distancing

— Limited snacks offered via Snack Shack

— same crew working each week

— sanitation procedures followed between each transaction, no contact

— individually wrapped sweetener and creamers for coffee

— individually wrapped snacks

— offered free or

— pre-ordered and purchased with credit card

DEVOTION

Engage online community

Groups of 50 or less.

Continued precautions as with groups of <10

Opportunities for smaller events in the sanctuary with same precautions as used for different worship services above.

Restrooms sanitized every hour??

Children's and Youth Specifically

Possible outside events, if deemed safe.

Kids First and Students First:

Tape off grids on floor in Cove for spacing for Preschool and K-5

Daniel, Kenton and SS teachers present

Parent pick-up: parents wait outside

classroom in pre-marked areas for physical distancing. Children are released when

parent gets to door or wait in a marked-off "social zone" outside of Cove

with chairs for appropriate distancing

Parent's Forum available to connect with proper distancing

Offer Spiritual Gifts Inventory course

Child Care during events returns as needed.

COMPASSION

Continue programs as above with adjustments

Mission Outreach Thrift Store open

JUSTICE

begin to identify neighborhood needs via small groups

Return to Church

Stage 4

Indicator: Herd immunization or vaccination is readily available.

Mandatory Precautions: based on what's advised by medical profession

Restrictions: based on what's advised by medical profession

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Entire plan is subject to approval by the District Superintendent. Transition from one stage to the next requires approval by the District Superintendent.

Already investigating protective barriers and installation of automatic light switches. All air filters are being upgraded in all buildings.

Will need to determine the priority for occupants to return to the physical building.

WORSHIP

All are welcome to return to the Sanctuary.
Those unable to attend in person,
please continue to worship with us online.
New Worship schedule and services offered
Choirs back
Full congregational participation
Fellowship between services returns

DEVOTION

All small groups and gatherings return
New online community integration
Continue supporting and developing small
grou

COMPASSION

Continue support and development of small
groups

JUSTICE

Continue identifying neighborhood needs
Begin supporting neighborhood work in small
groups
Begin to develop small group/neighborhood
partnerships