



# First Reformed Church

*Building God's Kingdom One Life at a Time*

1101 7th St, Sheldon, IA 51201

• (712) 324-2130

• [sheldonfirstreformed.com](http://sheldonfirstreformed.com)

## **Our Ministry Response to the Governor's State of Public Health Disaster Emergency Proclamation due to COVID-19**

Dear First Friends,

The last week and a half has been a whirlwind of news, announcements, postponements, cancelations, lifestyle adjustments, and preparations in response to proclamations made and actions taken by state and federal authorities to create a "firewall" against the further spread of the COVID-19 virus. It has been overwhelming for many.

I try to put myself in the place of many senior citizens for whom the virus can be particularly harmful, or parents, who, with the cancelation of school, must find care for their children when work continues and doing it at home isn't an option. I'm concerned for our doctors and nurses who do some of Jesus' work to help heal people. We need them in case the virus should spread further and also to help heal the regular health troubles folks experience. I wonder about the children who are at home, but school breakfast and lunch may be their only meals. Add to these the further economic impacts that will be experienced for many months. We have many things to be concerned, about and these may only be a few. We are all making adjustments and adapting, even if just temporarily, for times that we nor any of our nearest living ancestors have experienced. The same is true for First Reformed Church. The church staff, your leaders, and I have been working hard this week to adapt our regular ministry plans to meet the Governor's Emergency Proclamation.

As we face these times of upheaval and the temporary adaptations, some of the Lord's Truth comes to mind to share with you. First, Jesus is alive and He reigns in heaven. The angel told the women who came to Jesus' tomb at dawn on the first day of the week:

*"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:5-8).*

Then in the same chapter, Jesus in his own words says, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Matthew 28:18).* So, because He is alive and in control, we can trust Him today and with all our troubles.

Second, because Jesus is alive and in control, there is nothing for us to fear. Even death has no power to separate Christians from Him. But if we find ourselves afraid, we should pray. The Lord says in His word, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 4:6-7).* If you are fearful, then pray or call me and I will pray for you over the phone.

Lastly, remember to love your neighbors. You don't have to be afraid because Jesus is alive and in control and if you are, you know you can pray, but your neighbors may not. They may be afraid for their health and life or not having enough supplies. So do what Jesus said:

*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him,*

*"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"*

*"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-31).*

So what can you do to love your neighbors? Make sure they have what they need. Go to the store for them. Share the supplies the Lord has provided in your preparation. Model a non-anxious presence that communicates what you know about Jesus. Keep yourself well. Abide by the wisdom of healthcare officials to keep a little distance so our doctors, nurses, healthcare staff and hospitals are not overwhelmed.

One way that together we get to love our neighbors is by being a pickup site for the Orab "Grab-n-Go" Café. The Sheldon Community School District is providing a sack lunch and breakfast to all children ages birth to 18 on Monday through Friday from 11:30-12:30. The kitchen staff prepares the meals at the school and teachers and staff are distributing them at the door. No food is being consumed on sight. There are eight pickup spots in the district: in Matlock, Ashton, Archer, and five in Sheldon. First Reformed Church is one of the pickup spots and another is at Larry's Repair.

In times of upheaval, we can respond in one of two ways: either we push ourselves away from the Lord or we let Him draw us near to Himself. Please join me and let the Lord draw you near. He does that as we remember His Truth.

Now, we do need to make some temporary adaptations to our regular ministry plans. In her proclamation, the Governor has ordered that no gatherings of more than ten people take place. This includes spiritual and religious gatherings. I do not like the curtailing of God-given rights that we share as Americans, but for a limited time to help keep our neighbors, doctors, nurses, and healthcare staff well, and our hospitals open, we can love our neighbors by not gathering to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

This past Thursday evening, March 19, a comprehensive plan for worship and all other FRC ministry events was presented to the Elders of First Reformed Church. The following temporary adaptations were adopted until March 31st or a later date as proposed by the Governor:

**Worship:** Regular Sunday morning worship is suspended. Instead, a recorded worship service with songs, announcements, prayers, and the message will be produced and uploaded Saturday nights to our church website and YouTube channel for online viewing Sunday mornings. Then an email will be sent to you which will include the link to each Sunday's online broadcast. The recorded worship service will also be sent to Premier Communications for cable TV broadcast on Tuesdays at 4:00 PM on local channel 12. Finally, the recorded worship service audio will be sent to KIWA radio for broadcast one week later on Sundays at 10:00 AM on FM 100.7. Our aim is to provide a sense of normalcy and familiarity as best as we can under the current circumstances in which we find ourselves.

**Bulletin:** The church bulletin will be available in two formats. It can be found on the church website, [www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/bulletin.cfm](http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/bulletin.cfm), or paper copies will be available in the green mailbox outside the north kitchen door after 4PM on Fridays.

**Discipleship:** RCYF, Alpha Teens, FaithWeaver Friends, Women's Circles, Sunday School and all other discipleship gatherings at the church building are suspended. Shelley Hoogers, our Director of Outreach and Discipleship, is developing plans to email materials for parents to provide an "at home" Sunday School. Aaron Feltman is developing plans to create an online youth gathering that students 7-8 and 9-12 can connect to on their phones at home. VBS and Rocky Mountain High are still in the works. Going forward, please plan on these two events happening in July.

**Life Groups:** Life Groups can continue to meet at their own discretion in one another's homes.

**Giving:** While worshipping at home, it can be easy to let giving slide. You and your family can continue to give two ways. First, you may give electronically by texting the letters "SFRC" to the number, 77977, or give on the website at [www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/give](http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/give). From there you can give a one-time gift or set up a recurring gift. The most economical giving is a direct withdrawal from your checking account. If you need help, give the church office a call or stop in. Second, you may also click on the "Give" tab on the church app and following the onscreen prompts. Finally, you may also mail your offering to Sheldon First Reformed Church, 1101 7th Street, Sheldon, IA 51201 or drop it off at the church office during the week. The office will remain open. The Deacons appreciate your continued generosity in these uncertain times.

**Communion:** At the present time we will suspend celebrating all communion.

**Funerals:** The Iowa Funeral Directors Association is following the CDC's recommendation and urging all funeral services to be limited to 10 people including the pastor and musicians. First Reformed Church will follow this guidance. Other accommodations for families to offer written condolences and record the service or livestream the service from a personal phone or other device can be made. No lunch or visitations will be hosted at the church building.

**Weddings:** Weddings officiated by Pastor Paul or another approved pastor will be limited to the bride and groom, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, the maid or matron of honor, the best man, one vocal musician, and one instrumental musician.

**Pastoral Visitation at Hospitals and Nursing Homes:** Presently no hospital or nursing home is allowing pastoral visits. This includes the Christian Retirement Home. Phone calls or video chat are encouraged and the utmost effort will be employed by Pastor Paul, Shelley Hoogers, along with the Elders and Deacons to care for congregation members.

**Pastoral Visitation at Home:** Pastoral visits at home are at the discretion of both the congregation member and Pastor Paul, Shelley Hoogers or the Elder and Deacon. Arrangements will be made in advance via phone to plan the visit. If a home-visit is planned, Pastor Paul, Shelley Hoogers or the Elder or Deacon will apply liberal amounts of hand sanitizer before and after the visit for everyone's safety.

**Day-to-Day Church Operations:** The church will be open during normal hours on Monday through Thursday from 8AM - 4PM and on Friday from 8AM - 12PM. You may enter through the south office door. Please remember to use hand sanitizer before you arrive and after you leave.

**Future Changes:** If the Governor's Emergency Declaration is lifted and gathering recommendations increase but are limited to 250, our plans above will be adapted to accommodate that change and reflect more of our familiar Sunday morning and ministry practices.

In this time of upheaval, here are several ways to stay connected to the life and ministry of FRC during this unusual time.

**WEBSITE:** [www.sheldonfirstreformed.com](http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com)

**WORSHIP VIDEO:** [www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/worshipservices.cfm](http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/worshipservices.cfm)

**BULLETIN:** [www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/bulletin.cfm](http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/bulletin.cfm) or paper copies are available in the green bulletin box outside the north kitchen door after 4PM on Fridays

**RADIO BROADCAST:** Sundays at 10:00 AM on FM 100.7 (will play the prior week's service)

**TV BROADCAST:** Tuesdays at 4:00 PM on local cable channel 12

**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/sheldonfirstreformed](http://www.facebook.com/sheldonfirstreformed)

**E-GIVING LINK:** Text the word "SFRC" to the number 77977 or give online at [www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/give](http://www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/give)

**TRADITIONAL GIVING:** Mail to Sheldon First Reformed Church, 1101 7th Street, Sheldon, IA 51201 OR drop off your offering at the church office during the week.

**"MY CHURCH" APP:** Download on Google Play or the App Store or text the words "SFRC APP" to the number 77977 and follow the on screen prompts

**PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAISES:** Call the church office at 324-2130 or Pastor Paul's home (see the directory) or email Pastor Paul at [frcpastor@outlook.com](mailto:frcpastor@outlook.com)

The best thing we can all do is to not be anxious and provide some normalcy when many things aren't normal right now. (I will always be available for you to contact at my home (see the directory) or the church in person or at 324.2130. If you can't receive any visitors right now I can contact you by phone or video chat.) With respect to you and your family, I urge you to continue regular routines when possible. For example, if you have children at home, have them do some school work during the day and have dinner together. Use this chaotic time to draw closer together as a family and to the Lord. Watch the worship broadcast on Sunday. Really pray with me when I am praying. Write out a check to send or click on the give tab when the offering time comes. Open your Bible at home while I read the scripture. Do things that are as close to normal as possible. Eat your regular Sunday dinner afterward. Please do "normal" as normally as you can.

Friends, we've never been in such a situation before, and while we are trying to be as proactive as possible, we are making plans for which we have no prior experience. Thank you for reading. We are doing our best with the changing circumstances around us.

Grace be with you,

*Pastor Paul*

Pastor Paul