



First Reformed Church

Building God's Kingdom One Life at a Time

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• sheldonfirstreformed.com

August 23, 2020

Dear First Friends,

Hello again. As the summer is quickly coming to an end, the staff and leaders of FRC are eager for the ministry year to begin. It saddened us all when the pandemic closed up nearly all our institutions, including Sunday worship, but we were very grateful when in May, our Governor signaled that churches could once again hold public worship. At that time we updated our ministry response with protocols for worship over the summer. Now with this letter, I want to share with you an additional and comprehensive update that covers nearly all ministry areas of First Reformed Church.

The practices for worship will be very familiar to what has already been taking place this summer, but with two services. We have some new equipment that will make cleaning between services and during the week much easier. Additionally there are a few small changes with respect to funerals and weddings and pastoral visits. You will still be able to connect with FRC through the expanded methods that were put into place during the pandemic and we will continue to livestream both worship services. However there is one large change that needs additional explanation.

At the end of April and beginning of May, the guidelines for churches to host public worship once again only had in mind a typical Sunday morning worship service. They didn't provide guidance with respect to expectations for youth and children's ministry and the other ministry areas that are part of a local congregation. Other sources offered wisdom but when the Sheldon Community School District presented their "Return 2 Learn" plans we took their wisdom. With this plan as a guide, we have created a plan for both hygiene and cleaning that allows for as much physical distance as possible. With this in mind, it quickly became clear that we did not have adequate space for ministries from Preschool to 12th grade. The hard decision was made to cancel Sunday school for adults and prioritize the space available for children and youth. In addition, because we are not offering morning coffee, we can use the Fellowship Hall as well.

This is a sacrifice for adults and a decision that wasn't made without concern. However, nearly all the adults who attend are safe and secure in the Lord and would experience less harm in giving up their class and space for the sake of children and youth for the year. Next fall I hope that our familiar routines and practices can return. For those adults who would like to be invested in continued learning, please consider joining a Life Group or begin an adventure by starting a new one. Our Director of Discipleship, Shelley Hoogers can help you get plugged in.

This update will go into effect on September 1st and updated again on January 1st, 2021.

In March in light of the pandemic, we made changes in order to love our neighbors well. With the following updates we aim to do the same and provide for the functioning and life of the body of First Reformed Church.

Grace be with you,

Pastor Paul

Pastor Paul

Worship Services:

- Regular Sunday morning worship will continue with both the 8:30AM and 10:45AM services on **September 13th** with a limited seating capacity on a first-come first-served basis.
- The building will be properly cleaned during the week in preparation for Sunday and between both services, according to the recommendations from the CDC guidelines with an anti-bacterial and anti-viral solution. **The Bibles and hymnals have been temporarily removed from the pews to make cleaning easier. Please be sure to bring your Bible from home.**
- We all will be entering through the east glass doors. If walking isn't a problem, please park your vehicle further away so that those individuals who are less able may make their way to that entrance with less difficulty.
- You will find the doors propped open at 8:10 AM and 10:25 AM. They will remain open until 5 minutes after the worship service begins. During times of inclement weather and the winter somebody from the hospitality team will greet and open the doors for you. Depending on weather, climate control in the sanctuary could be an issue, so please dress with this in mind.
- As you make your way to the entrance of the sanctuary, you will pass by a table with both an offering box and bulletins. If you have brought a gift to the Lord, you can drop it here. A deacon will be standing nearby for security. Then, if you like, grab a bulletin. Please take your bulletin home or discard it in the recycling or trash.
- Immediately before entering the sanctuary, please clean your hands using the provided hand sanitizer at the sanctuary entrance or use your own hand sanitizer.
- When you begin to find your seat, please choose one with the following in mind.
 - First, every other pew in the sanctuary will be open. Please choose an open pew and move to the center to allow others to be seated in the pew if space allows. The other pews will be blocked off with painter's tape.
 - Second, as you and your household are seated, please maintain safe distancing practices between your household and others.
 - Third, seating in the overflow will be available to you.
- If you arrive and find no further seating in the sanctuary or the overflow, one of the deacons at the back of the church will direct you to the Fellowship Hall for additional seating. Please place chairs from closets so that there is at least six feet between each individual and/or household. The service will be shown on the television screen.
- **We will not be shaking hands** at the entrance, during worship, or afterwards.
- **We will not pass offering plates.** You may place your offering in the offering box, give electronically or mail your gift to the church office. These options will be announced during worship.
- **The nursery will not be available.**
- **Children in Worship will not be offered.** Young children will remain with their family throughout worship.
- Some attendees will wear a mask and others may not. Everyone is welcome to wear a mask, but they are not required.
- **At the present time we will continue to suspend celebrating all communion.**
- **The Choir and Bell Choir will not meet.**
- We may have individuals share special music.
- Please dismiss yourselves beginning with the front row and the back row simultaneously and work towards the center. Those dismissed from the front will exit the sanctuary through the door nearest the organ. Those dismissed from the back will exit through the east doors.
- **Coffee and fellowship time in the building will not be provided at this time.**
- The church mailboxes will be in the Fellowship Hall. You may pick up your items after worship.

- Each worship time will be live-streamed through sheldonfirstreformed.com, broadcast on cable TV on Tuesdays at 4:00 PM on local channel 12, and on KIWA radio one week later on Sundays at 10:00 AM on FM 100.7.

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

Discipleship: The classrooms and meeting spaces throughout the building will be properly cleaned during the week in preparation for Sunday and Wednesday night according to the recommendations from the CDC guidelines with an anti-bacterial and anti-viral solution.

Sunday Programs:

Nursery

- **Will not be available**

Children and Worship

- **Will not be offered at this time**

PreK – 6th

- **There will be no singing for opening exercises** for the PreK and Kindergarten classes.
- Single 3 year-old will be added to the 4 year old class.
- Tables and chairs will be available and will be arranged to allow for as much physical distance as possible.

7th – 8th & 9th-12th

- Tables and chairs will be available and will be arranged to allow for as much physical distance as possible.

Adults

- **Sunday school cancelled to make space for children and youth**
- Please consider the following options
 - 1) Join a Life Group or start a new one
 - 2) Come to the Adult Bible Study on Wednesday night
 - 3) Please consider being a teacher with students or children

RCYF

- Meet outside or in Fellowship Hall
- **No snacks will be provided.**
- Soup and Pie Supper - Put off until the spring

Wednesday Night Programs:

The north door of the church will be opened at 6:15 PM. This door will be used for both entering & exiting the church. Children are asked to go directly to the classrooms using the steps by the organ room.

FaithWeaver Friends

- **There will be no Wednesday night singing or activities that combine more than two classes.**
- **No snacks will be provided.**

Alpha Teens

- Meet outside or in the Youth House
- **No snacks will be provided.**

Frozen Food Sales

- Will still take place in October.
- Those who order items will be asked to pick up their items on the delivery date or make other arrangements
- Alpha Teen members will not be delivering items to individuals.

Baked Potato Supper

- Will still be held in the spring
- Date may be moved to accommodate the RCYF Soup and Pie Supper.

Adult Bible Study

- Wednesday night only
- As much physical distance as possible
- In the Fellowship Hall, or in the overflow, if the Fellowship Hall area is needed for the youth.

Choir

- **We will not be having choir at this time.**

Bell Choir

- **We will not be having bell choir at this time.**

Other:

Life Groups

- Will continue to meet at their own discretion in one another's homes.
- Adults are highly encouraged
 - to join an existing group.
 - go on the adventure of starting a new one.

Women's Circles

- Meet at the church
- **No food or beverages will be served** during the meetings if held in the church building.

Christmas Program

- A decision will be made by the end September.
- Due to our large attendance for the program, the possibility of pre-recording the program and sharing it on the church website for viewing is being considered.

Creative Movement

- We will resume this while being conscious of social distancing guidelines.

Outreach:

Sportsmen's Banquet

Occurring as planned largely because it is being held at an off-church venue with many safety/health guidelines in place.

Love on the Locals

Projects that are outside like leaf-raking should not be a problem.

Thanksgiving Meal

TBD with the possibility of a drive-through meal.

Funerals and Visitation : Funerals can be in the sanctuary or another offsite location at the choosing of the family. For a memorial service in the sanctuary, we will follow the directions given above for worship. Meals or receptions after the funeral will not be permitted in the church building at the present time. In addition families should make arrangements for visitation at the funeral home or another location as they will not be held in the church. At the present time we will not be hosting visitations at the church.

Weddings: Weddings officiated by Pastor Paul or another approved pastor will follow the guidelines for entering and seating as given above for worship. Bridal parties will be spaced as far apart as can be reasonably accommodated. Guests exiting the sanctuary should be dismissed by ushers row by row, make their way to the sanctuary exit, sanitize their hands, and then greet the newly married couple before heading directly outside. Meals or receptions after the wedding will not be permitted in the church building at the present time.

Meals and Food: At this time, there will be no meals, beverages, snacks, candy, suckers, etc. provided in the church for the following activities ...

- Family Night
- Sunday School
- Youth Groups
- FaithWeaver Friends
- Women's Circles
- Committee & Consistory Meetings
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Fellowship following services
- Sunday Morning Coffee

Giving: You and your family can continue to give three ways. First, if you will be attending worship in person, you may drop your gift to the Lord in the offering box outside the sanctuary. Second, you may give electronically by texting the letters "SFRC" to the number 77977, or give on the website at 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. Third, you may also click on the "Give" tab on the church app and follow 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.

Pastoral Visitation at Hospitals and Nursing Homes: Pastor Paul and the Elders will work with the congregation member or family to coordinate these visits as needed. Sanford Senior Care and other nursing homes are not allowing pastoral visits. Phone calls or video chats are encouraged and the utmost effort will be employed by Pastor Paul, Shelley Hoogers, and our Consistory 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

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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. Face masks will be worn at the request of the congregation member.

Office Hours: The church will be open on Monday through Thursday from 8 AM – 4 PM and on Friday from 8 AM – 12 PM. 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 change our plans above will be adapted to accommodate that change and reflect more of our familiar Sunday morning and ministry practices.

Here are several ways you can continue to stay connected to the life and ministry of FRC.

WEBSITE: www.sheldonfirstreformed.com

WORSHIP VIDEO: www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/worshipservices.cfm

BULLETIN: www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/bulletin.cfm or paper copies are available in the green bulletin box outside the north kitchen door after 4 PM 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

E-GIVING LINK: Text the word "SFRC" to the number 77977 or give online at www.sheldonfirstreformed.com/give

"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