



# The First Presbyterian Church of Naples

*In the Heart of Naples with the Love of God:  
we worship, we love, we grow, we serve*

July 31, 2020

Dear First Presbyterian Family,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I write to inform you that the Session decided this past Tuesday evening to continue the suspension of public worship until September 13. This action was taken upon the recommendation of the Reopening Task Force and with regard for the safety and good of all.

As you know, since worship was suspended in early March, the Reopening Task Force and Session have continued to track the COVID-19 data. What it shows is that the number of cases, deaths, and hospitalizations, as well as the positivity rates on tests, have all risen dramatically in Florida and in Collier County over the last weeks.

Research shows that public worship can be a “super-spreader” and we simply believe that Jesus’ command to love one another necessitates this action. We are aware, as you are, that there are some churches meeting now, and each congregation must make its own decision. Our decision recognizes that a significant part of our congregation is comprised of those in the most vulnerable group of 65 and older.

This decision also recognizes that when we do return to live worship, the worship experience will be very different. The Reopening Task Force and the Session have approved extensive guidelines that include physical distancing, no congregational singing and the wearing of masks. There will be no fellowship hour.

So, for now we will continue to worship together online. Our worship videos, which are sent to those who have e-mail addresses early each Sunday morning, and which can be found on our website, are being watched by considerably more people than would normally be physically present in these summer months.

At its meeting this week, the Session also decided that the Preschool will open for school in August. Unlike our members who can worship online, this is not an option for the preschool. Classes will be smaller in size and the Preschool will follow CDC guidelines.

While our church building is not open to the public, our church staff is back working onsite and fully engaged. In fact, July has been busier than previous years with many groups and committees meeting by Zoom. We have added a “Zoom with the Pastors” session on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. and encourage you to join us. One of the unexpected blessings in this time is that in some ways we are better connected than ever. In many of the Zoom meetings folks are joining online from their northern homes, something that was not possible before.

In addition, our Deacons and Stephen Ministers continue to call our members. We are staying connected and being the church of Jesus Christ.

It is a trying time for all of us. The church, like you in your lives, is adapting to

changing circumstances. We will continue to make decisions based on the most recent information and the rule of love. The Session will review the situation again at its August 25 meeting.

Finally, think of the apostle Paul writing to the church in Philippi. Even though he himself is in prison, he writes enthusiastically to encourage these believers, telling them to rejoice. He encourages them and us to pray with thanksgiving, promising that the peace of God will guard their hearts. And he concludes that he has learned to be content in all circumstances, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."  
*(Philippians 4:13)*

Please consider who you can encourage in this time. You may be homebound, but that does not mean that you cannot share the love and hope of God with others. Reach out to those you know who would love to hear an encouraging word from you. And pray.

And, as always, if you are aware of a need or have needs of your own, please let us know.

May the peace of Christ be with you,



Rev. Craig Goodrich, Pastor

Session Elders

Norman Brown  
Carleton Cleveland  
Duncan Connell  
Jill Crawford\*  
Shirley Hagerson\*  
Doug Jensen  
Jim Kier\*  
Deborah Meeson-Vige\*  
Saralene Oldham  
Patty Rutzler  
Jerry Perkins  
Tom Morr\*  
David Weigel  
Barbara Weiss\*  
Jan Witman

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