



Questions and Answers COVID - 19 and the Path Ahead

July 2, 2020

*First United
Methodist
Church
Salem, Oregon*

1. What does Phase 2 mean?

First United Methodist Church is following the guidance from the Greater Northwest Area Bishop provided in the publication “Reimagining Life Together” that can be found [here](#). This document provides guidance and requirements for local churches to follow to open their facilities with care and love for the congregation, with the clear guidance of “Do no harm.” The guidance identifies four phases for a safe reopening. All churches began in Phase 1 with all facilities closed except for essential tasks with a maximum group size in any building of five people. Phase 2 allows 10 people to access the buildings; Phase 3 allows up to 50 people to be in the facilities and is intended for small gatherings such as weddings and memorial services; and Phase 4 will allow in-person worship to resume and has no numerical limits on numbers but retains many of the safeguards from the earlier phases. To move from one phase to the next, each church must develop a plan for review and approval by the District Superintendent. First Church’s “Plan to Get to Phase 2” was approved by the Superintendent on June 21. FUMC is now a Phase 2 church.

2. What are some of the safeguards in Phase 2 to reduce the risks of infection?

These are some of the safeguards in Phase 2 that we are taking to reduce risks of infection for anyone inside our buildings:

- No in-person worship
- No in-person singing
- Masks are required while inside
- Six feet distancing is required
- To enter, one must be in good health
- Access is limited to essential personnel
- Safety and sanitation supplies will be pre-positioned
- Advance online reservation of building use is provided to manage numbers
- There is only one approved entry and exit per building; all others will be signed as closed
- There will be one authorized restroom per building; all others will be closed
- Frequent cleaning of surfaces is required
- Sign in/Sign out logbooks will be used to track individuals entering the buildings and, if necessary, for contact tracing
- Signs will be posted throughout reminding occupants of the requirements



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3. Are all of the Open Doors congregations doing the same?

All of the Open Door congregations are working on plans to open their facilities and we have been sharing our documents with their task force leaders. In-person worship (Phase 4) will not occur in any congregation until all Open Door Churches are prepared implement that phase.

4. Why are we being held to a higher standard than others?

Out of a sincere love for the congregation and the desire to protect those most vulnerable, the Bishop and the Reentry Task Force are working hard to balance the interest in using our facilities with the need to protect our congregation. It is clearly recognized that many are missing the fellowship of the services in the church buildings. However, we are aware of the experiences and the consequences of others who failed to be cautious. Accordingly, we are committed to guide our reentry safely and carefully. At times, we will be more cautious than either state guidelines or others may be. Without a vaccine or cure for COVID-19 our path of faith leads us to “do no harm.”

5. When will we go to Phase 3?

The ability to open the facilities to more people will take time, planning, and a clear observation of prevailing circumstances. As this is written in early July, the number of cases is rising in Oregon and there are serious considerations of slowing of opening at the state level. Our cautious approach must allow for these conditions to stabilize. A plan for moving from Phase 2 to Phase 3 must be developed by the Reentry Task Force and approved by the District Superintendent. We will not submit our proposed plan for approval until we believe moving to Phase 3 is in the best interest of our church family.

6. Why can't we sing in the building?

There is clear scientific evidence that singing expels particles (and virus) a greater distance and at in greater amounts than breathing and talking. Similar concerns have been expressed for playing wind instruments, which also involve deep breathing and strong exhalation. Recognizing the science and the risks, the Bishop's plan for *Reimagining Life Together* prohibits in-person singing in all phases.

7. How will I be safe if I am allowed into the buildings?

The District-approved plan for Phase 2 for FUMC includes standards for entry; requirements for distancing, hand sanitizing, and wearing a mask. The church will have appropriate protective and cleaning supplies available at the approved entrances to the Historic Building and MICAH. The plan limits the total number of individuals within each building to no more than 10. Preapproval for entry, registration when entering and



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exiting is required, and other procedures will be in place to maximize the safety of the people in the buildings.

8. How are we ever going to have live music in our services?

We will continue to have recorded music for the recorded services. Playing the organ does not require extra breath and can be done while wearing a mask. While it is a disappointment to the many choir and other music volunteers, the Music Director will work to provide a meaningful worship experience without placing our musicians at increased risk.

9. Even when we resume in-person worship will we continue to have on-line services and connections?

As the virtual services have taken hold, we have seen new members and visitors tuning in. Additionally, online services are reaching members who are be unable to attend owing to health, mobility, or other issues. We plan on continuing and expanding the on-line options even as reopening occurs. The virus is with us and will be with us for a long time. Until it is safe to share together inside a building, we will always find ways to gather in spirit even if not in person.

10. Who is making Decisions about opening the facilities?

The FUMC Reentry Task Force, a committee of church leaders, has been tasked by the Administrative Council to develop a plan that complies with the Bishop's directive and the needs of the congregation. The plans for moving from one phase to another will depend on meeting criteria set by the Bishop and approval of the District Superintendent.

11. Who is on the Reentry Task Force for First Church?

The members of the FUMC Reentry Task Force are:

Robert Chandler, Chair, Administrative Council
Dennis Gallacher, Chair, Board of Trustees
Ken Bierly, Chair, Staff-Parish Relations Committee
Jennifer Lewallen, Worship Chair
Jan Morgan, Worship Chair
Kathy Pressler, Church Administrator
Heather Ingersoll, Director of Christian Education and Family Ministry



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12. How can I contact the Reentry Task Force if I have a question?

The best way to contact the members of the Reentry Task Force is to send an email to:

reentryfumc@yahoo.com

13. Who do I do if I need to enter the Historic Building or MICAH?

If you need to go inside either building, you must first contact Kathy Pressler, our Church Administrator by email (preferred) or by phone. Kathy is coordinating entry to help ensure the total number of individuals in each building does not exceed 10. To reach Kathy:

Email (preferred): fumcfacilitiesmanager@gmail.com

Cell phone: 503-507-5739

Entry and exit into both buildings are through the main doors on State Street. Upon entering you will be required to wear a mask and sign into the logbook. In addition to logging your name and contact information, you must also acknowledge that you will abide by what we call Rule #1, which will be posted at each entry point. Rule #1 essentially says that you are in good health and have been free from COVID-19 symptoms for an appropriate period of time.

14. What are the requirements for workers doing repairs, maintenance, inspections, or other contracted work?

The District Superintendent has told us that paid workers doing necessary repairs, maintenance, or contracted activities do not count toward the total allowed limit of 10 people in each building. Even so, we will continue to limit the total number of individuals as much as possible to keep risks low. Workers who will be on the premises for a short period of time will be required to follow the same requirements as everyone else, including using the building entrances on State Street, logging in and out each time, wearing masks, and maintaining social distancing.

We have made special accommodations for the Solar Project, which is expected to start in July. These contractors will be onsite for several weeks and will be entering and exiting the buildings many times each day. Workers involved with the Solar Project will enter and exit each building through the alley doors. There will be a separate logbook for the contractors. They will only be required to log in at the beginning and at the end of each day, maintain social distancing (except when it interferes with their work), and



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wear masks while inside. The Solar Project workers are bringing their own chemical toilet.

15. Where can I get more information?

For the requirements and guidelines regarding the phased reopening of church facilities, see “Reimagining Life Together” by The Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church:

<https://greaternw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Reimagining-Life-Together.pdf>

For updates from the Oregon Health Authority on COVID-19:

<https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>