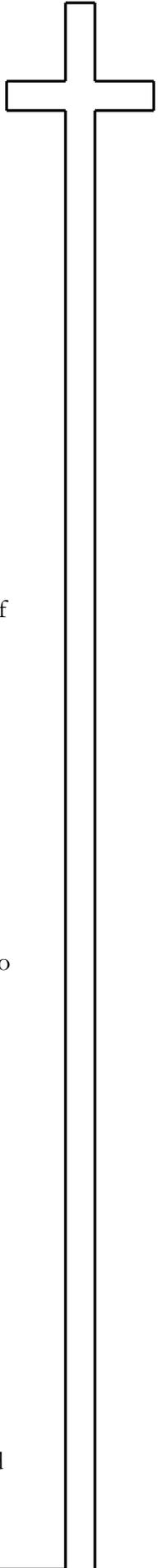


# THE REFORMED CHURCH OF PORT EWEN

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Dear Reformed Church of Port Ewen,

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

This is an update on our life together as it relates to COVID-19. We continue to ask for your patience and your grace in all of this. As St. Paul writes in Ephesians: “I therefore, as a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:1-2, *emphasis mine*).

This week the Mid-Hudson Region has begun to re-open under Phase 1 guidelines set by the State of New York. According to the criteria at this time, churches would open under Phase 4 (six weeks from Tuesday, May 26th at the earliest).

**The consistory and I have begun talking about what it will look like for us to hold worship together when that is possible. We are working on a document that will clearly explain our policies and procedures for re-opening! When that is finished, we will distribute that to you.**

We fully acknowledge that there is much we do not know. The situation continues to develop, new discoveries made and information released. In our decision making we want to be humble and flexible, and we will change our policies and positions based on the best information available.

One of our core values that guides our decision making is this: In Christ-like love we look not only to our own interests, but to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4). *The gospel of Jesus Christ is not about asserting the rights of a select few at the cost of others, rather it is about suffering and giving up rights for the sake of others.* This is the example and the way of our Savior, Jesus Christ. As St. Paul writes: “*If one member suffers, all suffer together*” (I Corinthians 12:26).

In your emails, texts, and phone calls I sense the pain and sadness and lament that you carry. But as those who follow Jesus, “who for the *joy* set before him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2), we journey down the path of Jesus filled with that same joy. That is the mystery of the gospel: suffering leads to joy in God.

We are not without hope! I see the hope of God in at least two ways. First, we have the hope just mentioned. Our suffering together will paradoxically lead us closer to Jesus where we experience joy and peace and love.

Second, throughout the history of the Church there have been times when God’s people could not gather together corporately. During times of persecution and exile, both in the past and in the present, and in previous pandemics, God’s people were scattered and could not gather together. And yet God sustained His Church then and He will now. God is faithful and will see us through!

Friends of God, as we enter into the season of Pentecost when we remember God sending the Holy Spirit upon His people, it is especially true that though we are scattered, Jesus is present to us, ministering to us, and that we are bound together across time and space by the work of the Spirit. Jesus promised to not leave us orphaned, but to send the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter and Helper (John 14:8).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your elders, deacons, or Pastor Kevin.

God be with you, friends.

Sincerely,

Pastor Kevin  
On behalf of the Consistory