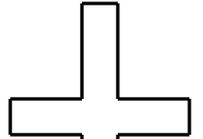


# THE REFORMED CHURCH OF PORT EWEN

P.O. Box 580 | 160 Salem Street | Port Ewen, NY 12466

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11 June 2020

Dear Congregation of the Reformed Church of Port Ewen,

We are so excited to announce that we will return to in-person worship starting Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020!

While we initially thought we would have to wait until Phase 4 of the New York State reopening plan, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced last week that it is advisable for churches to return to worship during Phase 2, as long as they remain below 25% capacity. We meet that threshold.

Enclosed you will find:

- A statement of our core Biblical values as a community (p. 1)
- Our reopening guidelines and procedures (p. 2)
- What to expect when you come to church (p. 3)
- FAQ's and further explanations (p. 4)
- Our policy on the use of our building and grounds by outside groups (p. 5).

We ask that you read through our values and our guidelines carefully. It is important for us as a church community to all work together in this.

If you have any questions, please call the office (T-Th 9am – 2pm), Pastor Kevin, or any of your elders and deacons.

Even though worship will be different, we are so excited to be able to gather together. We thank you all for your patience and endurance. Most of all we praise God for His faithfulness to us. Soli deo Gloria!

Grace and peace,

Pastor Kevin (on behalf of the Consistory)  
Minister of Word and Sacrament

**Reformed Church of Port Ewen**  
**Statement of Values & Guidelines for Reopening**  
**June 10, 2020**

**Core Biblical Values**

*Sacrificial love for the sake of our neighbors*

Philippians 2:3-5 tells us: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

As Christians we love others and sacrifice for them even at cost to ourselves. That is the way of Jesus Christ, who gave up his life for the world.

*Grace & Unity*

St. Paul writes, “I therefore, a prisoner for 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 4:1-3).

Life in community together is hard. But the way of Christ calls us to “bear with one another in love” — that means we are gracious with each other even when we disagree. We seek to maintain unity even when it is not easy. People make mistakes. Wrong decisions will be made. But we are committed to walking in a manner worthy of Jesus Christ. We are committed to the practice of forgiveness and repentance, forbearance, patience. We will practice the love of Christ.

*Humility*

We are committed to a posture of humility. Humility is a distinctly Christian virtue. There are many verses in the Bible that talk about God humbling the proud and exalting those who are humble. In 1 Corinthians, when contrasting our knowledge of God in this world versus what we will know in the life to come, St. Paul writes: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

We believe this limited knowledge extends beyond our knowledge of God to include all aspects of our existence. As humans we are finite beings. We only know so much. We see this play out almost daily as so much of the information about the virus has changed and continues to change. We do not see this as a problem, or evidence of a vast conspiracy. Rather, it is just the way human knowledge works.

The decisions we make are based on the limited knowledge we have at the time. In hindsight some of these decisions may look foolish. As a church we are committed to humility both as we make decisions *and* as we receive the decisions that are made. Humility is hard. As human beings we want certainty and are tempted to grasp after that which makes us feel secure. Humility asks us to admit that we do not know and to accept our limited ability to understand. It invites us to trust in the faithfulness and saving knowledge of God, and not in our own knowing.

## Procedures & Requirements for Worship

### Prior to Sunday Worship

- ❖ ***Required to stay home:*** anyone who has had a fever within 72 hours, has a cough, or has had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 within the previous 14 days. When you enter the building on Sunday you will be screened with these questions by the greeter.

### Upon entering the building/grounds

- ❖ ***Masks are required.*** Children under the age of 2 are not required to wear masks.
- ❖ ***Attendance will be taken.*** This is only done so that if someone should come down with COVID-19, we will be able to do contact-tracing.
- ❖ ***Hand sanitizer will be placed at each entrance/exit to the worshipping space.*** We ask that you apply hand sanitizer when you enter and exit the building.
- ❖ ***Social distancing will be practiced.*** We will keep a distance of six feet between persons and/or family/friend units. We will be worshipping in Fairbrother Hall as it gives us more space and flexibility.
  - ***Those who live under the same roof may sit together.***
  - ***For those who live alone: If you live alone, but want to choose one person/family to sit with, this will be allowed provided that both parties agree and understand the risks involved.***

### The Worship Service

- ❖ ***Bulletins for worship will be placed on chairs by Pastor Kevin each week prior to worship.*** We ask that you do not share your bulletin and you discard it or take it with you when you leave. This will decrease the amount of points of shared contact.
- ❖ ***Offering plates will be placed at doors into which you can place your offering.*** We will not be passing the plates during the service.
- ❖ ***Passing of the peace will be done as a call and response.*** We will refrain from physical touch for the time being.
- ❖ ***Singing will be reduced and there will be no choir.*** Studies show that singing may increase risk due to the projection of droplets into the air. We will reduce the amount of singing in worship and ask that you sing quietly so as not to project.
- ❖ ***Communion procedures:***
  - Prepackaged bread and juice will be served in individual containers prepared by one individual with gloves and mask. Servers will wear gloves and masks. Congregants will discard the containers when they leave worship.

### Post Worship

- ❖ ***There will be no coffee hour for the time being.***
- ❖ ***Cleaning and disinfecting worship spaces will be done in-between each worship service.***
- ❖ ***If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, please contact the Church office and/or Pastor Kevin immediately.***

## **What to Expect When You Arrive at Church**

- ❖ **Make sure you have your mask with you! You will be asked to wear one.**
- ❖ **Enter through the Atrium entrance facing Salem St. only.**
- ❖ **You will be checked in by a greeter who will screen you with these questions:**
  - Have you had a fever in the last 72 hrs?
  - Have you experienced any COVID-19 symptoms in the last 14 days?
  - Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
  - Have you had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
- ❖ **You will be asked to use the hand sanitizer located inside the doorway.**
- ❖ **Worship will be held in Fairbrother Hall. Chairs will be set up and spaced for social distancing. We can work with you to accommodate your family/friend unit size.**
- ❖ **Keep six feet of spacing between you and others when possible and do not physically touch others.**
- ❖ **Offering plates will be placed at the entrance into the worship space for you to deposit your offering. We will not pass offering plates during worship.**
- ❖ **Worship will be shorter. We are reducing the amount of singing. The sermons will, intentionally, be shorter. We will not have the passing of the peace as normal nor a space in the liturgy for the collection of the offering.**
- ❖ **When worship is over we ask that you exit through the Atrium entrance and that you use hand sanitizer as you leave.**
- ❖ **There will be trash bins so you can discard anything you need to on your way out.**
- ❖ **If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 after attending a worship service, *contact the Church office and/or Pastor Kevin immediately.***

## Further explanations and frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

### **Why masks? —**

While initially the CDC did not recommend the wearing of a face covering, as more and more evidence was gathered, it was determined that masks actually help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

*Wearing a mask is less about your safety and more about considering the safety of others. It stops you from spreading droplets out into the air for others to breathe. **In this way, wearing a mask, even if you don't want to, or don't care about your own health, is a very simple Christian thing to do. It is considering the health and well being of others over your own sense of comfortability and freedom.***

For more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-mask/art-20485449>

### **Why social distancing? —**

Social distancing, better named “physical distancing” is one of the best known practices to stop the spread and avoid infection. COVID-19 spreads when people are in close contact for a prolonged period of time. Close contact and prolonged exposure allow for someone infected with the virus to launch (through talking, coughing, sneezing) droplets into the air which then can land in the mouth and/or nose of other people nearby. The six foot rule gives enough space for a vast majority of droplets to fall out of the air.

Those who live together in the same space are allowed to sit together without social distancing.

*We also want to invite those who live alone to pick a person and/or family whom they are regularly in contact with, and whom they are comfortable being around, as someone they can sit with during worship. Both parties must agree to this beforehand. We know that for those who live alone, coming to church can exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness.*

Read more here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

### **Why are we singing less? —**

Singing is so important to the faith. We couldn't imagine worship without singing. But singing is not without risks. In order to sing we must project our voice. Multiple scientists caution about the dangers of singing. This is why we have decided to go forward without a choir for the time being. We will also reduce the hymns/songs in worship from three to two, and we will be singing less verses. We are also asking you to sing with an “inside voice” — meaning that the less you project, the safer it is for us to sing.

Read more here:

<https://apnews.com/c3bf9767c833b8ae66be22dd4fc996e6>

<https://www.livescience.com/covid-19-superspreader-singing.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm>

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/may/coronavirus-germany-churches-singing-worship-masks.html>

### **Why can we not have coffee hour if we practice social distancing?**

Fellowship of the body of Christ is important. It fosters relationship and unity among the members. Sadly, during this time, we believe it best to suspend the practice of coffee hour in order to maximize the ability to keep people safe. We want to minimize shared surfaces and spaces, as that is the best way possible to limit the spread of COVID-19.

## **Policy for Use of Building by Outside Groups**

Our church building was regularly used by outside groups prior to it being closed in March in response to COVID-19.

At this time we have decided to keep our buildings and grounds closed to use from outside groups. This is a regrettable, but necessary decision, in order to limit the exposure of our congregation to the virus.