

Reformed Church of Port Ewen
Statement of Values & Guidelines for Reopening
May 11, 2021

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 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.***
- ❖ ***Social distancing will be practiced.*** We will keep a distance of roughly six feet between persons and/or family/friend units.

The Worship Service

- ❖ ***We will be meeting in the sanctuary. You will enter the sanctuary through the atrium, from Fairbrother Hall.***
- ❖ ***Offering plates will be placed at both the entrance and the exit 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.***
- ❖ ***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

- ❖ ***We ask that you exit the sanctuary quickly, through the doors that open onto Salem Street. (For those that need access to the elevator in the atrium, you are welcome to exit through Fairbrother Hall).***
- ❖ ***Coffee hour will be held outside (weather permitting) on the church yard (to the east of the sanctuary/atrium entrance). There is no mask requirement when outside.***
- ❖ ***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.**
- ❖ **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?
- ❖ **Worship will be held in the sanctuary. Every other pew is marked off for social distancing. We ask that you space yourselves out in the pews, unless you are sitting with a friend/family unit.**
- ❖ **Offering plates will be placed at the entrance and exit of the sanctuary 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 front entrance of the sanctuary (Salem Street), unless you need access to the elevator in the atrium.**
- ❖ **If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 after attending a worship service, *contact the Church office and/or Pastor Kevin immediately.***