



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

1 West Harker Road | Fort Oglethorpe, GA | 706.866.2521 | www.FPFO.org

November 17, 2020

Dear First Pres Family,

Thank you for your prayers and to the many of you who have offered to pick up groceries and others supplies for us. I continue to improve and am eagerly anticipating the end of my quarantine, God willing, on Nov. 22.

If you have not yet signed up for text message alerts from the church, please do so if you are able. This will allow us to quickly send out information and updates. I hate the thought of people being unaware of what is going on especially in times like right now when we're changing our schedule with little notice and in response to rapidly changing data.

To sign up for text message alerts from the church: text *FPFO* to 84576. Likewise, if you haven't signed up for the email updates, please visit the church website to be enrolled: www.FPFO.org. The enrollment form is on the right side of the home page about half way down.

I. Virtual-Only Services Nov. 22

While it had been my intention to be on vacation this coming Lord's Day, we are going to reschedule the visit from Pastor John Blevins to a later date this year or next. It doesn't seem the best way to introduce a new church planter by having him only online! This coming Lord's Day morning (November 22) we will continue to have only virtual services with the following schedule:

9:45 a.m. Sunday school

10:45 a.m. Morning Worship

No evening worship

The reason for suspending on-site activities is twofold:

First, we want to give ample time for people who were exposed by Joe or me at Wednesday night to ensure they are free from symptoms before encouraging everyone to gather again and possibly create another generation of infections. Additionally, those of you who came into contact with Joe and/or me on Wednesday are *encouraged to follow CDC Guidelines* regarding quarantine and isolation as well as monitoring your own symptoms. The guidelines are available here: [LINK](#). If you have questions or need advice about this, please call Elder David Bosshardt (706-861-5672).

Second, since my own diagnosis as well as that of Joe Wilson, people from at least two other households in the church have received positive Coronavirus diagnoses. These people also developed symptoms on Thursday, but they were not in attendance at Wednesday night this week. It's possible they contracted Covid-19 at the same time Joe and I did, but it's also entirely possible that all of these are entirely unique.

Given the current prevalence of Covid-19 in the congregation right now, Session believes the most faithful and prudent course is to wait one more week before returning to corporate worship with the hope that the disease will run its course within all our households by that time.

One piece of good news is that Beth will be supplying recordings for the singing portions of the service this week.

II. Wednesday Night Activities

We will not have on-site Wednesday night activities for the rest of the year. However, this week we will have prayer meeting virtually at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom (the link is available on the website: www.FPFO.org/live). Beginning in December we will have prayer meeting and then continue the *All to God's Glory* class on the Westminster Confession of Faith, but both of these activities will be held remotely via Zoom, Facebook Live and/or YouTube.

III. Resuming Corporate Worship Nov. 29

God willing, we will return to corporate worship on Nov. 29. At that time we'll resume our consideration of the Ten Commandments. I had a letter all typed up and ready to go out in preparation for preaching the Seventh Commandment last week, but that sermon will have to wait until we have resumed corporate worship. Here is the schedule for Nov. 29:

9:15 a.m. Morning Worship (1) (on-site only)

9:45 a.m. Sunday school (onsite and live-streamed)

10:45 a.m. Morning Worship (2) (onsite and live-streamed)

6:00 p.m. Evening Worship (onsite and live-streamed)

As always, if you are sick or have been exposed to someone who is experiencing sickness, please join us virtually that Lord's Day.

Session's policy regarding masking will remain the same, namely that masks are required for all people over age ten when inside the building. Session is not, however, willing to force people to wear masks or bar anyone from entering the 10:45 a.m. service who refuses to wear a mask or has a conscientious objection to doing so.

Nonetheless, given these recent events we (i.e. the Session) urge and plead with everyone to please wear a mask inside the building. I recognize masks are a pain, but I believe wearing masks together is the best way to ensure we can continue to worship corporately to minimize the risk of another outbreak at the church.

As of this writing, we don't know the full effect of the cases and exposures from last week. Please continue to pray for those who were present on Wednesday that God will spare them from infection and restore all of us to health.

IV. What About Cleaning?

The building continues to receive its regular, weekly cleaning. The cleaning crew normally sanitizes the tables, doorknobs, light switches, and other "high touch" areas.

Scientists tell us coronavirus lingering on surfaces becomes unable to infect people in as little as a few hours or at most several days. Given what our cleaning crew is already doing every week and our best understanding of the coronavirus, we don't believe an additional cleaning is necessary since we will be waiting well beyond the estimated period in which coronavirus can persist on surfaces.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter and for allowing me to serve you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the church office.

Your pastor,



Ryan Biese