



A Framework for Reopening

Palouse Federated Church is committed to reopening safely and effectively and in a manner that is best suited to our mission to help people depend on Jesus and our strategy for achieving that mission: that we gather in *worship*, *grow* spiritually, and we go to *serve* and *share*. To that end, we offer this framework to help our community understand the considerations we are attending to as we plan the reopening of our building for worship and ministry.

1. We need to reopen without unnecessary delay. Hebrews 10:25 says "Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another." We are doing that now through online services in our homes and that is good. While some of you are highly engaged online, we recognize for many of us, it cannot replace being physically together in worship as a community. Connection is not only a high value, but a human need. We recognize that community is a non-negotiable, so while we continue to explore ways to connect and engage our congregation remotely, we are also highly motivated to reopen the building and worship together in person as soon as we can.

2. We need to reopen responsibly and effectively in a way that protects not only the health of our congregation and staff, but also the health of the community we live in. We are paying close attention to the guidelines from our state and national governments. We are learning best practices from other churches and we are developing a plan to respond to a wide variety of scenarios. When we do reopen the building we will do our best to provide a safe environment in regards to hygiene and social distancing to provide a meaningful worship, ministry, and community experience that works for adults, children, and youth. We want to provide a warm welcome, genuine hospitality, and be aware of our witness to our neighbors and community. In the meantime, we will continue to bring worship to you wherever you are.

3. We need to reopen united. As you know there are a variety of opinions and passions that swirl around this issue. We are all in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat. Some of us are experiencing the devastating economic consequences of this lockdown - losing jobs and income. Some of us are understandably fearful of the very real health consequences of COVID-19. Others are experiencing loneliness and isolation in painful ways which itself can adversely affect our health. Still other may be experiencing all the above. Which part of this crisis causes us the most pain is likely to influence our opinions on how and when to reopen. We know that God does not call us to agree, but he does call us to be united, to put ourselves in the other person's boat, to refrain from speaking divisively, and to know that our needs are just as valid, but not more valid, than other people's needs.

Summary: We need to reopen without unnecessary delay, we need to reopen responsibly and effectively, and we need to reopen united. Those values and guiding principles are obviously in tension with each other, and staff and church leaders are praying through and discussing those tensions and seeking the Holy Spirit's leading. We ask that you please pray for us and our discernment. This also is a very fluid situation that changes frequently calling all of us to be flexible.