

Hi Friends,

Beyond the general announcements of things that are happening in the upcoming week, I wanted to take an opportunity to give you an update on where we are, and what we are working on, in terms of our response to the Covid-19 pandemic and re-opening our facilities. As a background, early in the pandemic, I gathered individuals who are involved in various ministries like worship, facilities, staffing, finance, our leadership council, community ministries and others who have expertise in emergency management, to form an “Emergency Planning Team” (EPT). That group worked diligently to formulate our local church plan towards reopening. (That plan is on our website under the Links & Forms Tab or you can use this direct link to find it, as well: <https://www.kennewickfirst.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Church-Reopening-Plan.pdf>). As you know, our challenge has been living in the areas in which our local church plan meshes with the plan given us by the PNW Annual Conference and the Washington State plans.

When we originally formulated our plans, information was scarce and ever evolving. Recognizing that reality, we made a commitment to revisit the plan as new information and “best practices” emerged. This week our EPT met and put together a proposal to begin limited re-openings specifically in worship to submit to the Bishop’s office. The proposal uses the data source of www.CovidActNow.org which is the agreed upon data source for our churches, so that we are all using the same data in our planning. Our prayer is that this begins the process for us to begin having in-person worship services in a limited way in the months ahead. Because this is exactly that... a process, I do not want to propose dates or numbers or specifics because as we have found in the past, things change rapidly, but I hope to be able to give you some new information in the upcoming weeks on this front.

Several months ago, we decided that we were going to continue to operate with the systems and protocols we have in place until **at least** Easter, as a way of curbing the frustration of planning and always being in a “maybe in three weeks...” or “maybe in a month...” mindset that was taking a toll on the moral and energy of us all. With that commitment we will continue in our present protocols through Easter Sunday ... at Least... with hopes that we can begin the process of re-opening in limited ways in the month ahead. To that end, our Easter celebration will be some kind of limited in person gathering, either using our “drive-in” church model and its approved protocols on our own property, or at another outdoor venue. Information about that will be coming in in next week’s email.

That is where we are... As your pastor, I have always wanted to be as open and transparent with you all regarding my own faith, frustrations, and joys because we are all disciples making our way to be more like Jesus. This week was especially frustrating for me because, as you all remember, it was the third week of Lent in 2020 that we had to start doing our worship services virtually. This week is again the third week of Lent and we are still worshipping together via that medium. Things that I could do “in my sleep” as a pastor with 25 years of experience, have become long, difficult, time consuming and require vast amounts of energy. I know the novelty of online worship; remote Bible studies and gatherings is wearing off for all of us and we are

tired. **BUT** (I have a dear friend who says, “Jesus always has a big but...”). I have been encouraged as well, from the notes and cards you have sent me and our staff encouraging us (THANK YOU!). I have been moved to tears at emails I’ve received from people in remote places who have tuned in to our online worship and rediscovered a sense of worship and community as strange and different looking as it is. I, like most of us, have been reminded that church is more about this community that works to usher in the Kingdom of God beyond limits of buildings and programs. So, although I am tired, I am full of hope that the God who loves us has not forsaken us. Like so many examples in scripture and history, the people of God continue to be people of life, grace and hope even in hardship. I’m convinced that God is with us, even as we are weary. Thank you for your support and commitment to be people that live and share the hope that only comes through Jesus!

Pastor Mark

Here are the things happening this week for you to be aware of:

ALL CHURCH ZOOM BINGO

At the bottom of the page is a flyer about an all-church bingo game that will be happening on March 14th. Sign up at <https://rsvp.church/r/yYVuCLi4> by March 7th to get the card and zoom link to participate and win...priceless...prizes! No cheating :-)

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Don’t forget that on Sunday at 10:30 am we will be posting our Sunday Worship Service on our YouTube Channel (<http://www.youtube.com/PiratesoftheColumbia>) We'll be continuing the Lenten Sermon series on "How do we do this?" focusing on our Baptism Vows. I am so happy to have Rachel Loomis, our church’s Youth Ministry Director share her thoughts on the “Confess Jesus as Savior, repent of your sin in union with the Church that God has opened to all people!” portion of those vows! I hope you can join us this Sunday, or anytime you are able to tune in! ** As a side note, we will be presenting the video in a little bit different way. The YouTube video will be coming as a “premier”, which means that you can post comments, greetings, and hellos, or throw in an “AMEN” or two, in the comment section as the service plays in real time. If you tune in at other times you can watch it as a regular recording as we usually do.

VIRTUAL ½ HOUR COFFEE HOUR

Each Sunday at 11:30 am

Join us at 11:30 am after our Sunday Worship Service for an open Zoom format to connect and share a cup of coffee with one another. After our Sunday Worship Service, we will have an open Zoom conference for people to stop in and see each other face to face and just reconnect with one another. Feel free to stop in for a few minutes, or for the whole half hour and see who needs a haircut and say hello to friends. Follow this Zoom link at 11:30 am Sunday Morning, to log in: <https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/92776382874> - Meeting ID: 927 7638 2874.

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Wednesdays at 11 am

The Wednesday Morning Bible Study is taking place each Wednesday at 11 am. Feel free to log in on the Zoom Platform and spend the hour studying and exploring the Book of Acts together. Here is a link to the Weekly Bible Study: <https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/96778398043> - Meeting ID: 967 7839 8043.

EASTER MEMORIAL DONATIONS

In continuing with our tradition of giving in memory or in honor of our loved ones, due to the pandemic we are placing a Cross on the front lawn of the church and inserting flowers on it. To buy a flower (or more), please send in a \$8.00 donation to the church office at 421 W. Kennewick Avenue, Kennewick, WA 99336, and we will place the flower on the Cross and print you and your loved one's name in the Easter Bulletin. You will find the form on our website under Links and Forms, Church Operations.

STAYING CONNECTED CLASS

Staying Connected is a Free 4 session class on Zoom, for those with early- stage memory loss and their care partner. It covers topics such as communication, safety, depression, family connections, and staying active in things you love to do. This class meets in a comfortable, support group type setting so participants can connect with others with similar experiences. We also provide resources for the participants to use as they begin their journey with memory loss.

Julie Logan Hooley and her team are scheduling classes throughout the year and would like to set aside some dates that might work well for members of our Church.

For Questions regarding this online Zoom style class please call:

Julie Hooley

Care Navigator

Alzheimer's Association, Washington State Chapter

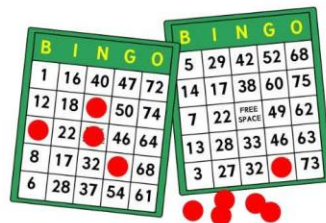
office: 509.392.8571 | cell: 509.412.2371 | jmhooley@alz.org | www.alzwa.org

BINGO

All Church Zoom Event!

March 14th

4-5:30 pm



BINGO with us, from your home.

We will provide the Bingo Cards...

But you must pre-register by March 7th to receive them!

Click on this link to reserve your spot and to receive BINGO cards!

<https://rsvp.church/r/yYVuCLI4>

This event brought to you by Rachel & Cynthia.
Questions- call the church office at 509-582-2163



Zoom in to Play for Prizes!!