



PRESBYTERY *of*
SAN FRANCISCO

545 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530

PSF Re-Opening Letter UPDATE—October 6, 2020

Siblings and friends

As counties are moving into the next phases of the shelter in place order and partial opening of the places of worship, we want to remind and point you to some issues and requirements that we will all need to think and pray through together.

Please read thoroughly the “best practices” guidelines from the State of California for keeping houses of worship safe during the pandemic. There are requirements as well as strong recommendations. The State guidelines are the baseline standard and are required to be a part of each County’s health directive. Each County can make more stringent requirements. Please do read your County guidelines thoroughly as well. As stewards of our faith, our people and our property, we want to be mindful of both our urgent desire to worship together, and the need to keep our church community as well as our wider community as safe as possible in doing so.

It is possible that some indoor worship may be allowed this Fall. It will likely be limited to a smaller percentage of a building’s occupancy rating, with a larger maximum number of people allowed if the worship is outdoors. A building’s approved occupancy rating may be somewhat smaller than churches realize. It is almost always less than the amount of people who come for larger worship services such as Easter or Christmas. If you don’t know your allowable occupancy, contact your County or City Fire Marshall for help. You may also ask a licensed architect to do those calculations.

All services and meetings will require masks as well as social distancing. And so far, no food services such as coffee or communal meals are allowed.

Churches have an obligation under state law to provide reasonable safe practices to limit the spread of the pandemic, and to let their worshippers and users know those practices. Please put in place strong protocols to keep your worshipper and users safe such as consistent cleaning instructions before, during and after events at the church. It is also recommended that that leaders be trained in all of the safety protocols for the church. We also recommend that you consider utilizing one of the attached liability release forms with your worshippers. Such a “release” may not fully protect you from a liability lawsuit, but it does provide a better defense if such occurs. Following all safety guidelines further protects you from legal suits. The waiver has another purpose of helping your worshippers understand the risks and the measures they to be aware of to reduce the risk. The waiver can be modified to suit the needs of the church. (it is in MSWord format.)

We all groan with frustration, impatience and our need to be “back together” again. And we are all tired of this pandemic and the hardships it has brought to our lives. But as people of God, it falls to us to help ourselves and each other to find strength together to weather this storm. And it is a storm; it will someday be over.

Psalm 31:24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait upon the LORD.

With care from your Transitional Leadership Team:

Rev. InHo Kim, Partner for Congregational Vitality and Clergy Support

Jennifer Sacramento Streett, Partner for Operations and Presbytery Wide Communications

Rochelle R. Shaw, Stated Clerk

Rev. Leonard Nielson, Partner for Finance and Property Assets

Important Documents and Links:

- [CA State Guidelines Summary](#)
- [State Guidelines-CAL/OSHA](#) (Long version)
- [Sample Use Protocols](#)
- [Sample of Safety Policy](#) (Shared with PSF by First Presbyterian Church Burlingame)

- Alameda County Public Health Department
<http://www.acphd.org>

- Contra Costa Health Services
<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org>

- San Francisco Department of Public Health
<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/coronavirus.asp>

- San Mateo Department of Public Health
<https://www.smchealth.org/coronavirus>