

Churches: ‘We’re all kind of in shock’

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to livestream many of the hymns her congregation is used to singing.

Then there is the fact that many in her congregation skew older. For some, social media may not be part of their everyday life. They may not be familiar with livestreaming or video conference options like Zoom, increasingly used by everyone from school boards to friends hosting virtual happy hours.

“You’d be shocked at how much pastoral care happens in worship or at fellowship hour (after worship),” Patterson said. “Creating spaces for that to happen online is proving to be one of the major areas I’m trying to work through, to see what people can do — what they’re willing to do.”

But she hasn’t been pushing people to suddenly adopt new online habits to link with the church.

“Right now, honestly, I think we’re all kind of in shock, me included,” Patterson said.

Prayer chains

Many churches have started to look at ways they can begin to mobilize resources and care for at-risk members or anyone else in need in the community. Church members offer to grocery shop for each other and have created private Facebook groups or prayer chains to field all types of requests.

At an emergency food bank at First Presbyterian Church in Astoria, volunteers are bracing for an onslaught of demand following layoffs across the city’s hospitality businesses.

Many of the volunteers are older, said Bill Van Nostran, the pastor. Though everyone is taking extra precautions — donning gloves and masks, changing how food is passed to clients — some are choosing to stay home. Fewer volunteers means potentially fewer days for the pantry to be open.

Closed church doors affect more than just believers. At First United Method-



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Pastor Bill Van Nostran, of First Presbyterian Church in Astoria, puts on a face mask, hand-sewn by Joan Suggins, as he prepares to open the church's food bank.

‘JUST BECAUSE WE ARE PHYSICALLY SEPARATED I DON’T THINK THAT MEANS WE NECESSARILY NEED TO BE EMOTIONALLY DISCONNECTED.’

Bill Van Nostran | pastor

ist Church, closing the doors to congregants meant also closing them to groups like Alcoholics Anonymous that used the building for regular meetings.

“That’s really hard,” Patterson said. “That’s a really important point of contact for a lot of people in our community.”

At the Knappa branch of the Christian Church of Warrenton and Knappa, a preschool that served around 40 children closed with the public schools.

Knappa has not been hit as hard as more tourism-reliant places, said Cory DeForrest, pastor of the Knappa church. But the social networks are becoming increasingly important. DeForrest has tried to get the message out that the church is there to help anyone in need. He has not fielded many requests yet.

He hopes that’s a good sign.

“We also live in a rural community that says, ‘I’m not going to ask for help until it’s almost too late,’” DeForrest said, “even though those same people would give their own shirts off their back for anyone else who needed help.”

Solace

Churches are echoing similar themes of finding strength in God. They post the usual verses. They reassure people that they are there for them. They post phone numbers and links.

Pastors say churches can offer solace in anxious times, even if it’s through YouTube.

Suits, of Coastline Christian, touched on the question of doubt in a recent sermon. Fearfulness in the face of the unknown or danger is a normal reaction, he told The Astorian.

“But for those of us that know the Lord, it’s not a

place we have to stay in, that fearfulness,” he said. “When we are fearful, we have God to go to and, in a sense, to give him our fears.”

In a message to congregants on the church’s website, John Nagle, the pastor of North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside, wrote: “Beloved, this is an unprecedented time in America and the world. Things are changing at a speed which none of us can really stay up with. In one sense, I’d advise you to not even try.”

Instead, he pointed people to verses from the bible, including a passage from a book ascribed to the prophet Isaiah, who lived through dark, politically tumultuous times and was likely well acquainted with anxiety.

Van Nostran has been working his way through the First Presbyterian directory, calling church members and friends of the church just to see how they are doing. He offers to pray for them, finds out if they need anything.

“Just because we are physically separated I don’t think that means we necessarily need to be emotionally disconnected,” he said.



Alyssa Evans/The Astorian
Clatsop County recorded its third coronavirus case.

Virus: 715 ventilators available in Oregon

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The health authority reported 414 cases and 12 deaths from the virus statewide as of Friday.

Earlier this week, at the direction of Gov. Kate Brown, the health authority started to provide more detailed demographic information to the public on coronavirus cases. Ages, for example, are now disclosed in 10-year ranges, a narrower window to measure the people most affected by the disease.

Michael McNickle, Clatsop County’s public health director, on Friday declined a request by The Astorian to provide narrower age ranges for the three local cases so far. All three have been described by the county as people between 35 and 54 years old.

McNickle cited privacy concerns as the reason.

“We feel it is unnecessary to do so, and in this small community, more detailed information about a patient’s age may lead to patient identification, which is a violation of their privacy,” he said in an email.

Brown told reporters during a conference call

on Wednesday that she ordered the Oregon Health Authority to share “all COVID-19 information with the public that does not compromise patient privacy.”

That includes more exact age ranges of patients, hospitalization status and the number of available hospital beds and ventilators for virus patients. A potential shortage of ventilators has emerged as a critical issue for treating virus patients who require hospitalization.

The health authority reported that, as of Friday, there were 715 available ventilators in Oregon. Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones has said there are about 25 ventilators in Clatsop County, roughly divided between Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria and Providence Seaside Hospital.

Legislators, journalists and others had asked the state repeatedly for better data to track the virus. The health authority had been releasing cumulative data from Jan. 24, plus daily updates on confirmed cases, testing and deaths.

Dick Hughes of the Oregon Capital Bureau contributed to this report.

Dentists: Important part of health care

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equipment while continuing to help patients who may otherwise go to hospital emergency rooms for treatment.

They formed two groups. One group of dentists rotate in an on-call schedule to see emergency patients. The other group rotates on a teledentistry team schedule to consult with patients virtually and be available for hospitals to divert patients with dental needs.

The dentists are treating patients at Alexandroff Dental in Warrenton. Klemp said working out of one centralized location allows dentists to use less personal protective equipment and streamline their workflow. Only one patient is seen at a time as a safety precaution.

The dentists are also combining and storing their surplus personal protective equipment and will deliver it to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria and Providence Seaside Hospital if necessary.

Any profit made after overhead expenses will be donated to an emergency fund, which will support dentists or staff that may need assistance during the coronavirus crisis.

Klemp said the plan brings operating costs down for private practices while continuing to provide emergency services.

“This wasn’t done by one, it was done by all,” Klemp said. “They all pitched in, they all went different directions and gathered information. A game plan was put together in a minimal amount of time, and it’s a game plan I think can be used statewide.”



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
During the emergency over the coronavirus, local dentists are treating patients at Alexandroff Dental in Warrenton.

Klemp shared the local plan with state Sen. Betsy Johnson.

“My call to her was to be acknowledged as part of this Oregon health system. And we want to be a part of it and we want to take care of our patients,” Klemp said.

He said dentists also need to receive personal protective equipment from the state to treat patients. He said there may be patients who go to the emergency room with a dental need that is painful, but not considered an emergency. In those cases, he said it is better that dentists treat those patients.

Johnson said she sent the local plan to the governor’s office.

“People are going to continue to have broken teeth and dental emergencies,” the Scappoose Democrat said Saturday during her weekly radio show.

“The dentists will continue to have fixed costs. The dentists don’t want to let go of their teams of highly trained and trusted dental hygienists, dental assistants and others in their offices. So, I just want the dentists to know I have

lifted up their situation to the governor’s office and have made the case that these are highly trained medical professionals that functionally we are putting out of work and therefore out of service to their patients by virtue of being ill prepared at the state level with an adequate supply of personal protective equipment.”

Johnson said dentists are an important part of health care.

“I happen to think dentists are an integral part of the health care delivery system and I have been an advocate to make sure that dental offices have adequate PPE so they can go back to helping to serve their patients and the public,” the senator said in an interview.

Klemp said he appreciates the dental community being heard.

“The group of dentists in this community — every citizen should be so proud — they’re amazing,” he said. “They have stepped up in every way. We couldn’t have done what we did in this short period of time without seriously outstanding individuals.”

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We're going to have more cats and dogs as COVID-19 works its way around the world, so keep checking in and keep ADOPTING:

<https://www.petfinder.com/member/us/or/warrenton/clatsop-county-animal-control-services-or53/>



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