

Frequently Asked Questions: Reopening the Church

1. When will the church reopen?

Though both are modified, the church will open for worship on June 21, 2020 and the building will be open in a restricted capacity on June 22, 2020. There will be a limited number of meeting times available. The doors will still be locked, and admittance can only be gained by a previously *scheduled* appointment. To do this, we ask you call the office in advance at 724-222-0190 so that the office staff can schedule a time which you may enter. Then call again when you arrive so that someone can open the doors for you. Please **wear a mask** and bring a pen with you so that you can sign in and out of the building upon entry and exit. We must still monitor every area that is used in the building and maintain a very high level of cleanliness.

2. When the church reopens, will we go back to life as normal; that is, the way things were before COVID-19 closed the church?

It is to be suspected that there will be a new normal for at least a while. The church will have what we are calling a soft opening. This means that not everything will be functioning as it had and not all the church will be open.

3. When the church does reopen, will there be some type of health screening?

Every person entering the building will be **required** to wear a mask. Everyone will be **required** to answer a questionnaire with a few simple questions about your health. These will be made available to you in advance so that you may fill them out before arriving if you choose. **Every person must fill one of these forms out before entering the church.** A similar procedure is used at Washington Hospital.

After the form has been received, **every person will then be scanned** by an infrared thermometer to verify there is no fever. Only then may the individual proceed into worship.

4. When I come to worship and pass through the health screening, what is next?

Specially trained ushers will be in place to lead you through every step before and after worship. If heading to the sanctuary, there will be ushers to guide you to the steps or to get you on the elevator. At the top of the steps will be another usher who will direct you to an usher waiting for you at the pews.

Please understand the health and safety of the congregation are a very high priority for us. You may be used to going to your favorite pew, but that **will not** be possible to maintain social distancing needs. You will be seated in a pew following the protocols the ushers have been given to maintain safe distancing. Families will be seated together and then space set before the next seated group or individual. **This will be directed by the ushers.** A similar pattern will be used in the Covenant Center.

5. Will there be changes to the worship services?

Most of what you have come to love about the worship service you attend will still be in place if social distancing can be maintained. There will be no choir in the sanctuary because it is impossible to maintain social distancing, but other musical offerings are already being worked out so that we may celebrate the Lord in all His holiness.

Other changes that will be in place include the removal of the time of greeting as we cannot contact one another as we are accustomed. We will also continue what we had been doing with the offering prior to the closure. We will not pass the plates but will have them at the exit. Finally, the pastors will not be greeting you after the service. However, as has been the case throughout the closure, they will be available via phone, email, text, and video conference should you have a need or concern.

6. How will exiting the service be handled?

We have all been at weddings where the bride and groom left the service and then the ushers released the congregation pew by pew. This will be the case with worship. The ushers will release the congregation maintaining appropriate distances that can be maintained until members have exited the building. **It is important that we do this so that there do not end up being crowds of people congregated, thereby breaking social distancing.** Again, the ushers will be there to guide you out just as they guided you in.

7. What if I need to use the restrooms?

There will only be two sets of restrooms open: the ones in the narthex, and the ones across from the Covenant Center. There will be no access to the rest of the church building beyond the sanctuary and the Covenant Center hallway.

8. Will all the services on Sunday still be held like before?

Unfortunately, no. The 8:30 service will **NOT** be held during the “soft reopening.” This is not because we want to remove it. It will return as soon as possible. Under the guidelines we are receiving from the CDC and the Commonwealth, there is just no way that it would be possible to fully clean and sanitize the sanctuary and restrooms between the 8:30 and 11:00 services. That is nearly an all-day job. We would not be able to maintain the sanitary standards needed and thereby put people at risk. Let us repeat this: the 8:30 service **will** return but **not** until **all** restrictions have been lifted.

9. What if I still feel uncomfortable with gathering in large groups?

This is a decision everyone must make. You must determine how comfortable you are, and you must be aware of your risk factors. We are doing everything in our power to make sure you are safe, but nothing is fool proof. If you decide that you are not ready to be in a large gathering, we will still be putting the services on WJPA, Facebook, YouTube, and email. You will still be able to keep connected with the congregation while you await the time you are willing to return.

10. Will the church be open during the week?

Just as it has been, the church office will be open during the week and will continue to be manned by a small staff. However, the building will still be closed and only those who are scheduled may enter. Outside groups will continue to await a full reopening. Some meetings will take place, but they will be restricted to a single room with a very limited number of people. Large groups like the Session, Deacons, and Mission will still have to meet digitally until all restrictions are lifted.

11. How long will the soft reopening last?

The initial soft reopen will last one month. Just like this time during the closing, the Session will revisit the question regularly. During the plan’s implementation the Session may recommend to: 1) continue with the transition and reopening plan for an additional month; or, 2) resume regular scheduling and use of the facility and regular worship services; or, 3) revert back to closing the church and modified worship, should circumstances merit.

12. How can I learn more about the reopening plan?

We are committed to keeping you informed. We will continue to give you updates via social media, email blasts, mail, and the website. If you would like to see the full reopening plan, it will be made available on the website or a printed version may be requested by contacting the church office.