

Reopening Plan (FIFTH DRAFT)
May 2020 –Session Approved May 8, 2020
Reopening Taskgroup
The Church of the Covenant

The Session at its April 27, 2020 meeting appointed a Reopening Taskgroup, consisting of Jonathan Pachter, Clerk of Session, Pastor Scott Shetter, Associate Pastor, Pastor Stu Broberg, Pastor, and Fred Boni, Chair of the Worship Committee and tasked it with writing a draft Reopening Plan for the church to be presented to the next Session Meeting. The church has been closed and we have conducted modified worship since Session action of March 16, 2020. We are grateful to the skeleton staff who are present in the building from 9am to 3 pm each weekday (Debi Nicolella, Ralph Farabee, and Cyndi Barney). We are grateful for the team of people who are posting YouTube and Facebook services and livestreaming the Sunday services (Tom Evans, Sarah Core, Darla Pepper-Miller, Pastor Scott Shetter and Pastor Stu Broberg). This recording of worship and its broadcast via YouTube, Facebook and WJPA radio broadcast will continue during the transition period of time.

The Reopening Plan consists of a series of recommendations and adopted protocols that would occur over a one month, four Sunday, time frame. The plan is to balance both our desire to be together and return to normal church activities and worship while simultaneously caring for the safety and health of our congregation. We acknowledge our congregation consists of many people in at risk categories; hence, our concern and care. The Reopening Plan will be vetted and changed as a living document over time. The Session would approve the plan and we would publish and circulate it to the staff, leadership and congregation for their information. This review process would occur PRIOR TO the actual approval of dates for when the reopening plan would begin. We want to inform people in advance of what our plans are prior to when they would actually be implemented. We believe this will reassure the congregation that this process is being conducted in a thoughtful, measured and logical way.

The leadership will carefully monitor developments through our sources. Once the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania sets the rules to reopen for gatherings of more than 100 people, the Session would decide which Sunday we would reopen, and we would set in motion the elements of the plan. In the same way we exercised great care and took time to consider all the ways to begin the process of closure of the church, we will exercise that same care with our reopening protocols.

Our written plan would be available upon request for local or state authorities, staff and employees, and members of the congregation to review. The Commonwealth indeed requires for there to be a written plan in order to reopen, so it is a prerequisite for re-opening to have a Session approved plan.

The leadership will continue to monitor developments through our sources and will make periodic reports to our congregation. During each month of 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.

A. Reopening Sunday Morning Worship:

We would reopen two services a Sunday over the four week time of transition, the 9:43 service in the Covenant Center and the 11:00 a.m. service in the sanctuary. We would not yet reinstitute the 8:30

a.m. service because we cannot clean and sanitize the sanctuary after 8:30 a.m. is over and before 11am begins.

Changes in the Order of Service. There would be no Time of Greeting and no elbow bumping. There would be no time of offering but people could place their tithes and offerings in collection plates by the door as they exit. There would be no communion. There would be no baptisms scheduled. The Children's Message would require children to remain with their parents in the pews. There would be no fellowship time with food or drink following services. There would be no choir (there is no way for them to social distance in the choir loft) but there may be special solos and instrumental pieces. There would be no open nursery facility so children would need to sit in the pews with their parents. No Sunday School or youth group (they conclude May 17th) There would be no greeting at the door by the pastors following the services.

Entering the church building on Sundays. We encourage people to arrive 30 minutes early for **screening and entry procedures**. Only one set of doors would be open for entry -- the doors from the Parking lot into the Commons Area. The screening station may be set up on the outside if it is a nice day or on the inside if inclement weather. **People pass by a table staffed by volunteer nurses and health professionals, who would take people's temperatures with an Infrared Thermometer. There would be a brief survey that someone would be asked to fill out and leave on the table.** That survey would include the following questions: Do you have a temperature?; Are you evidencing any symptoms of sickness?; and, Have you been exposed to anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19? These screening protocols parallel those being used at Washington Hospital for admittance. The brief surveys would be forwarded via email on Fridays asking people to fill one out in advance and bring it with them on Sundays. Printed surveys would be available on the check in table. Filling out the survey in advance will expedite the line. There will be lines on the sidewalk leading up to the entry doors and people are asked to use proper social distancing while in line. People must wear facemasks. There are the floor standing hand sanitizer stations next to the check in tables and people are asked to please use them prior to admittance. Ushers would then route people up the stairs, or press the buttons on the elevator for them, and then folks would make their way to the sanctuary. There will be a protocol developed by the ushers for people waiting by the elevator. There would be an usher standing next to the next available pew and someone would need to be seated in that place (not the "family pew"). Ushers would ask someone to sit in the pew at a correct social distance. Families could sit together, but the next person would need to be seated in the pew at a proper social distance. We estimate that **200 people** could attend the 11am service **in the Sanctuary** and 100 could attend the 943 service in the Covenant Center(our regular average worship attendance is 300 per Sunday). This needs to occur in an orderly fashion so there are not bunches of people standing too close to one another.

People who evidence any symptoms will be politely asked to return home and participate via Facebook, YouTube or listen via WJPA radio. Similarly, if someone will not wear a facemask or follow usher instructions they will not be admitted. We reserve the right to determine who should not be allowed to worship inside the building if they evidence symptoms or respond to the survey in a way that indicates they might be a risk.

Exiting the Sanctuary. Following the Benediction people would be dismissed by the ushers pew by pew, assuring social distancing, back through the Commons Area or the Narthex Area and Beau Street doors and in a way to avoid bunches of people in the aisles. Obviously, there would be an usher to help those who need to use the elevator.

Exiting the Covenant Center. Likewise, the ushers will dismiss people row by row and they will be asked to exit out the rear parking lot door (near the youth lounge entrance) to avoid bunches of people in the Commons Area between services. Obviously, some people for mobility issues may need to exit the opposite direction through the Commons Area.

Building Access. The rest of the church building will continue to be on lock down. People would not have the ability to roam throughout the church building at will. They would have the ability to enter and exit through the Commons Area, to enter into either the Covenant Center or the sanctuary, and to have access to specific bathrooms.

Recommendation: Approve the Reopening protocols for Worship; task a group of volunteer nurses and health professionals under the leadership of Parish Nurse Linda Grimm with screening at the check in table; and task a group of specially recruited ushers under the leadership of head usher Steve Johnson and provide this group with training and ushering instructions.

Recommendation: Approve the purchase of 4 Infrared Thermometers (two for use of the preschool) and face masks sufficient for the nurses, ushers, and other staff members.

B. Reopening the Church Building Midweek:

The Building is open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and is staffed by the Business Administrator, The Building Superintendent, and the Sexton. However, the outer door to the Commons Area is locked and people must call ahead in order to be let into the facility. You must call and make an appointment to gain entry. This is because we would continue to maintain the careful cleaning protocols of sanitizing the facility whenever and wherever someone would enter. The person seeking entry would need a very good reason for entry. The rest of the staff would have access to their offices on an as needed basis. We would ask people to sign in (but use their own pens), and to use the hand sanitizer stations as they enter and exit the building. The internal doors to the facility would be locked down to inhibit random roaming throughout the facility.

Outside groups would not be scheduled to use the church facility during the transition/ reopening plan.

One evening meeting on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday would be permitted. But the only meeting room which would be available is the Dining Room (with access to one set of bathrooms on the same hallway). Meetings with more than ten people in attendance could not meet in the facility but could continue to have telephone conferences, Zoom Meetings, and email exchanges to conduct business. Meeting space and time is scheduled through the church office and the church calendar. We could resource church groups to help them set up alternate digital meetings, upon request.

Recommendation: Approve the building use procedures for the transition period of time as part of the reopening plan; have a lockdown plan and cleaning plan that dovetails with building use and calendar.

C. Cleaning and Sanitizing Protocols:

The Building Superintendent has compiled an extensive plan that lists the cleaning protocols and the cleaning agents used. This extensive plan is incorporated by reference into this Reopening Plan. The goal is to provide cleaning and sanitizing after each use of the facility and in ways in which doorknobs, stair-rails, bathrooms, meeting tables, pews and other things which people may have touched are made

ready for the next people to use the room or facility. Much of the above-stated plan is to assure that we can carefully monitor those parts of the building that people actually access and to have them re-cleaned in advance of the next usage.

Recommendation: Approve the overall Reopening Plan and move to recruit volunteer ushers and nurses and health providers for the plans listed above.

Recommendation: Institute training plans for ushers and volunteer nurses and health providers.

Recommendation: Have a communication plan to inform key constituencies and the members of the congregation in advance of implementation of the plan.

We are grateful to a gracious and merciful God who watches over His people, who heals all our diseases and grants us life in His Son, Jesus Christ. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

SDB 04/27/20 revised: 05/01/20; 5/4/20; 5/11/20; 6/2/20 Session approved the plan, 05/11/20