

## **Guidelines for Returning to In-person Worship at Covenant** *As of May 17, 2021*

As for us, brothers and sisters, when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you—in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face. 1 Thessalonians 2:17

As we begin to return to worship together, remember to be kind to yourself and to others. We have been through an extraordinary year that required us to be in a state of hyper vigilance and separation. As we begin to gather again, do so as you feel comfortable, joining as you are ready and not before. Remember others are in similar circumstances and everyone is dealing with how to come out of isolation differently.

As time passes, the CDC recommendations and Dane County requirements will change. Covenant will change with them and be sure to keep the congregation informed. This summer or fall, the expectation is that we will be able to eliminate masks and social distancing, but until that time comes, we will maintain our distance and wear our masks as a sign of respect for one another.

### **1) How will we be seated in the sanctuary?**

- The number of people allowed in the sanctuary will be limited based on the church's ability to provide for adequate social distancing. This will necessitate signing up in advance to attend using the sign-up genius online or by calling the church office.
- Seating in the sanctuary will be marked with about every other pew left empty to allow for adequate social distancing. Tape will be placed where no seating is allowed.

### **2) What traditional worship practices will be altered?**

Worship services will certainly be different than before the COVID pandemic. Some of the changes will include:

- Masks will be required for everyone over the age of 5 regardless of vaccination status.
- Those leading worship or speaking during the service will not be masked, but will be seated well away from other participants.
- Bulletins will be available for pickup by congregants.
- The children's time will be presented on screen by video—no children will come to the front of the sanctuary.
- Quiet responses or mouthed words with your mask on are requested when participating in congregational hymn singing and collective responses.
- The passing of the peace will be no touch. Participants are encouraged to express greetings to one another using "air hugs," peace signs, and waves, but stay in their pew.
- The offering will be collected with a plate at the back of the sanctuary.

- Communion will be done on the first Sunday of the month and attendees will be presented with pre-packaged communion elements.
- Nursery and Kaleidoscope Worship Education will not be offered.
- Hymnals and pew bibles will be available; however, the pew pads will not be used.
- Additional directions will be explained by the pastor at the start of worship
- Access to the building will be limited to the sanctuary, narthex, lounge, and restrooms.

### **3) How will people arriving (or departing) be routed and seated?**

It's important that the 6-foot social distancing guideline be observed (except for family units and trusted friends). The Public Health guidelines on building capacity will be observed.

- Pews will be marked for appropriate seating to allow for social distancing. The balcony will be available with pews labeled for seating.
- As people enter the sanctuary, it is requested that you take a seat at the front, so that the sanctuary is filled from front to back.
- When the service is finished, people will be asked to leave from back rows first, to avoid congregating into a big group.
- Personal listening devices will be available on a table in the narthex on arrival. Please return them prior to exiting the building.

### **4) How will traditional greetings and fellowship practices be altered?**

This is a large part of the church experience and as such it's encouraged that people gather in the courtyard or other outdoor places to greet each other, using social distancing.

- A greeter will be stationed at the door to help guide people, but will refrain from hand shaking.
- The Pastors will not stand at the back doors as congregants depart the sanctuary.
- Bradfield cafe will be closed and other indoor socializing should be minimized.
- Conversations are welcome, but should take place outside in the courtyard, in the parking lot, under the overhang, or in the grass. When outside, please maintain social distancing.
- The coat room will be closed to ensure social distancing. Please take your coat with you to the pew.
- Attendees are encouraged to pick up their name tag, keeping social distancing in mind. With masks on, they are especially important! Please take your name tag home with you and remember to wear when you return until the pandemic social distancing restrictions are relaxed.
- The nursery, basement level, and other rooms will be closed and unavailable for use. The lounge will be used as an exit from the sanctuary and will be available to families with children (up to 3 family units or 8 people) who need to leave the sanctuary.

### **5) What protective, cleaning, and sanitizing policies will be followed?**

The church does everything it can to maintain a clean and safe environment.

- Masks are required for all attendees over the age of 5 regardless of vaccination status.
- There will be hand sanitizer available throughout the narthex for congregational use.

- The sanctuary is well ventilated and uses some replacement outside air during the ventilation process. The air handler employs high quality Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) air filters to capture particles for any recirculated air. This is only one notch lower than the highest value (HEPA) filters used in surgery suites. MERV 13 filters will capture approximately 90 % of virus particles or more.

**6) How can people coming to worship help maintain a safe, virus free environment?**

People attending worship, and particularly people over the age of 60 and people with immune deficiencies, are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated and to observe the waiting period for effectiveness of their particular vaccine before attending church in person. People should also be aware that it is likely that not everyone in attendance will have been vaccinated. For example, children are not eligible to receive a vaccine at this point in time.

- If someone has been exposed to the virus or is feeling ill, they should stay home.
- Wear masks and cooperate with the distancing requirements.
- Practice good handwashing and use hand sanitizer liberally.
- Encourage your family and friends to get vaccinated.

**7) What can families with children expect during in-person worship?**

Covenant families are welcome in worship, regardless of vaccination status. If you have specific questions or concerns, please contact Children’s Ministries Coordinator Donna Monson.

- Masks will be required for everyone over the age of 5 years regardless of vaccination status.
- The Nursery will not be open.
- Kaleidoscope Worship Education classes will not be available.
- A Family Worship bag will be provided for each family with preschool through 5th grade children. More specific information will be available from Children’s Ministries Coordinator Donna Monson.
- The Children’s Time will be presented on the screen by video, so no children will come to the front of the sanctuary.
- The Lounge will be available for families to social distance if they need to leave the sanctuary. Up to 3 family units (parent and child) or 8 people may gather there, maintaining social distancing as much as possible.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Matthew 18:20