



## First Presbyterian Church

65 North Third Street  
Newark, OH 43055

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Friend in Christ,

The Session of First Presbyterian has decided that we will go back to worship in the sanctuary on July 12<sup>th</sup>. I am confident that we will be able to safely have worship in the sanctuary by then. However, it is important to remember that July 12<sup>th</sup> is a goal we have set in an ever changing situation. The Session and I are looking at all that is happening.

What a joy returning to the sanctuary will be. Yet, our return to the sanctuary will not be a return to normal. We cannot go back to worship within the building without making prudent changes that keep everyone safer. There is no way of guaranteeing complete safety. When we decide to gather, we are taking on a greater risk of spreading COVID-19. This letter spells out how the church will function and how Sunday service will be different for the time being.

Starting July 12<sup>th</sup> and running through the end of July we are going to have an adjusted worship schedule. This will be a trial schedule. After a few weeks, we will better know how to move forward into August. Sunday will begin at 8:30am with a drive-in devotional service. The service will take place in the back gravel parking lot. We are calling it a devotional service because it will be a little shorter and won't have all of the same liturgy as the sanctuary service.

The Adult Elective class will then meet at a slightly different time 9:30am. The Adult Elective class will meet in Fellowship Hall, adhering to safe social distancing practices. The class will also continue to be available through Zoom. This way you have a choice in the way you participate.

The sanctuary service will then take place at 11am. The 11am service will also be transmitted via FM radio. You can hear the service from either parking lot or from 3<sup>rd</sup> street. A special section of the gravel lot will be marked off for those who will be listening to the 11am service in their cars. That way you can worship as more a part of the group. An usher will also come outside to check for prayer requests.

### **It is Key that We Do Not Come to Church Sick!**

- Individuals who are sick or who show symptoms of illness must stay home. You can still take part in the Zoom portion of the Adult Elective or listen to either service in your car; but please do not come inside.
- Staff, including the pastor, must follow the same rule. They should not come to the church property if they are sick or showing symptoms of illness.
- If someone shows up sick, or with symptoms of illness they will be asked to leave.
- If someone becomes sick during a church event. One qualified person will check on them, everyone else will be asked to move away from the location. If the person needs an ambulance or paramedics the event or service will be canceled.
- Anyone who is ill should alert the church office so that other church members can be made aware. This alert will be anonymous unless the individual who is ill specifically wishes themselves to be identified.
- Anyone who has become ill should stay away from the church property for the amount of time recommended by the CDC.

The following section spells out how things will be for the near term based on building location.

### **Fellowship Hall**

- No Coffee Hour or coffee station.
- No standard fellowship events.
- The Church Life Committee will attempt to plan appropriate fellowship events.
- No meals or dinners.
- Food and drinks may be brought in by individuals but not shared with others.
- A strict limit of 30 people at a time in Fellowship Hall.
- Any event will be properly spaced for social distancing.
- Social distancing is expected to be maintained.
- A sanitation station is located in Fellowship Hall.
- Masks are requested and available.

### **Sanctuary**

- There is a strict limit of 70 people at a time in the sanctuary. This includes, but is not limited to: worship, weddings, funerals and concerts.
- There will be collection boxes at the corners of the sanctuary for offerings. We will not be passing around offering plates.
- All items have been removed from the pew racks.
- There will be no paper bulletins or handouts.
- Pews have been marked for social distancing.
- Masks are requested and available.
- Sanitizer stations are present in the corners of the sanctuary.
- There is signage listing expectations.
- We will spend time in service explaining expectations.
- Traffic patterns are marked to aid in social distancing and reduce contact.
- The front left hand door will be for exiting the sanctuary and the front right hand door will be for entering the sanctuary; when looking at the stage. The door by the elevator will need to work as both an entry and exit door.
- The Worship Committee is preparing for the continuation of worship if staff or volunteers leading the service are unable.
- The Cry room is limited to 1 family.
- A second location, the nursery, is available for a second family with small children. The nursery is equipped for hearing the service.
- Communion will utilize individual pre-made communion cups.
- There will be no children's programming that takes the children away from the care of their families.

### **Bathrooms**

- All bathrooms are open to insure that there is adequate access for all people.
- All bathrooms are marked for use by 1 person at a time.
- Sanitizer station to be located outside of each bathroom.
- A special seat sanitizer is available in the bathroom stalls.

## Building Use General

- In planning, we are attempting to use as little of the building as possible. This makes it easier to keep the building clean and keeps us from smaller rooms that make social distancing impossible.
- The number of entrances into the building are limited to: one entrance off of the gravel lot, the handicap entrance off of 3<sup>rd</sup> street and the alley door closer to the front of the building.
- Rooms and spaces within the building that are not needed will be closed.
- At least 1 day must take place between the use of a particular location within the building in order to give the necessary time to clean and prepare the space.
- Social distancing is expected to be maintained in all locations.
- All interior doors in locations that are being used will be propped open if able.
- Any and all usage of the building must follow the guidelines of this policy.
- All usage of the building must be approved by Session.

## Cleaning

- The Sanctuary will be cleaned each week, but no earlier in the week then Wednesday. This helps reduce transmission to those cleaning.
- High touch areas will be cleaned daily.
- At least 1 day will take place between usage of a given area. This excludes the office area.
- The use of the building will be limited in area and frequency to aid in cleaning.

## Thoughts

-Everyone needs to follow these rules. We need to assume that people want us to maintain proper social distancing. If you want to give someone a hug, ask them, without pressuring them. If you want to sit by someone in the pews, ask them without pressuring them. If they say that it is OK, then it is OK. If not, we must follow their wishes without being hurt or judgmental. If we go around standing too close, giving high fives, handing out hugs and assuming that other people are OK with it; we will damage relationships and we will make people think twice about attending worship.

-I hope that everyone sees some of the positives that are happening around church. Drive-in service has really been a special time. Using technology has given people a chance to participate, who never could before. All of us have had a chance to reconsider what it means to worship.

-I look forward to this new stage in mission and I pray for the day we can leave this pandemic behind us while carrying the lessons learned with us.

In Christ,



Rev Steven Brand