

EFPC In-Person/Hybrid Service Protocol

Approved by Session March 25, 2021

This document has been prepared by the EFPC Covid Task Force and approved by session in order to guide the return to in-person worship during the COVID pandemic. It will be updated as leadership responds to continually evolving data and circumstances.

A Note from Pastor Kari:

From the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, we have been asking the question "What does it look like to love God and love our neighbors in this time?" At first, it was clear that the best way to love our neighbors was to move worship entirely online and practice strict social distancing. Caring for one another in this way has not been easy.

As the pandemic has continued, we have had to wrestle with balancing care for the physical health of one another and our community and care for the spiritual and emotional struggles that have resulted from prolonged isolation. It has taken a great deal of research, prayer, and discernment from the task force and the session to develop a plan that allows for some in-person worship while minimizing the risks to our church family and to our wider community.

I am thankful for the faithfulness of our leaders who have responded with deep thoughtfulness and compassion to this unprecedented time in modern history. We trust that our church family will show our love for one another by following these safety guidelines and showing grace to one another as we enter a new phase of "holy experimenting" with ways of returning to in-person and hybrid worship and church life. And so, with great hope and appropriate caution, we are excited to begin offering opportunities to worship in our sanctuary!

The Ten Commandments of In-Person Worship During Covid

(or, the highlights for those who want the short version)

1. Thou shalt worship God with a glad and sincere heart.
 2. Thou shalt stay home if feeling unwell or under quarantine.
 3. Thou shalt register to attend in advance.
 4. Thou shalt not have too many people in the sanctuary (currently, we are prepared to accommodate up to 25 worshippers).
 5. Thou shalt wear a mask that covers both mouth and nose at all times (unless under the age of 2).
 6. Thou shalt honor social distancing by remaining at least 6 feet away from anyone outside of thy household.
 7. Thou shalt follow directions (including for seating and dismissal) from the worship host.
 8. Thou shalt dress for the weather (windows will be opened to promote air flow).
 9. Thou shalt enjoy the instrumental or recorded music, but not sing.
 10. Thou shalt remember those who worship with us online--worshipping in different spaces, but worshipping together in spirit and truth.
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The EFPC Covid Task Force drew recommendations and guidelines from PA Dept of Health, CDC, and local Philadelphia Dept of Health guidelines for gatherings in religious institutions.

Data to be Considered for In-Person Worship

As we begin adapting to a phased return to worshipping in our sanctuary, the session has determined that **we are prepared to accommodate up to 25 people**, and anticipates increasing that number as public health indicators improve and as we become more practiced at this way of worshipping. Presently, religious institutions can operate services and gatherings at 15% occupancy, based on Philadelphia guidelines for religious gatherings. Based on this data, 38 people would be allowed in the sanctuary currently. We look forward to growing into this new way of worshipping together.

As of March 25, infection rates in 19129 are under 15 cases/10,000. This data is obtained via two-week rolling average and is available on the Phila.gov DOH website.¹ If the two week rolling average reaches 30/10,000, the session will reevaluate whether a return to all virtual worship would be prudent.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteer hosts are needed to guide safety protocol implementation before, during and after each in person worship service. Sign up for volunteers to be worship hosts (one for the front door and one for the door on the ramp) will be sent out by EFPC Office much like is done for liturgical readers.

To ensure the safety of all attendees, the worship host will be responsible for:

- Maintaining proper indoor traffic flow entering and exiting the service, and signage designating this traffic flow (attendees requiring the side entrance ramp are asked to be mindful of anyone exiting from that doorway)
- Ensuring that attendees are only sitting in available pews (some pews will be roped off to maintain social distancing) and maintaining 6' distance between other non-family members.
- Checking attendees against the pre-registered worship sign-up list (see below)
- Making sure visitor cards are filled out completely to adhere to contact tracing recommendations (see below)
- Double checking with all attendees that they are in compliance with the Wellness Checklist (<https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>) found on posters outside the front doors.
- Ensuring that masks are being worn properly (covering the mouth and nose).
- Direct row by row exiting after the service.
- Wiping down high touch surfaces after the church service with sanitizing wand.

¹ <https://www.phila.gov/programs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/testing-and-data/#/>

Signing Up for Indoor Worship

Attendees are asked to register for in-person worship using a sign-up sent by the church office or by calling the church office. Initially, we are prepared to accommodate 25 worshippers, in addition to the minister, and musician(s), and two hosts. When registering for worship, you will be prompted with general wellness questions (<https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>) that ask about potential COVID-19 exposure in the last two-weeks. The health of your fellow congregants depends on your acknowledgement that you do not have symptoms at the time of registering and that you have no known exposures prior to attending worship. You will be asked these questions again when you first arrive at in-person services.

- If there are 5 or fewer people registered for service by Friday, we will not have in-person worship on Sunday. Registrants will be notified by email on Saturday.
- If a visitor from off the street would like to join service, and there is room in the sanctuary, they will be asked to affirm that they are asymptomatic and have not been exposed prior to completing an ID card with name, number, and email for contact tracing purposes. The host will be responsible for making sure visitor cards are filled out and collected. Those cards will be placed in a basket in the church office in the event that we need to do contact tracing.
- The link to worship registration, safety protocol, and covid wellness checklist will be added to our website so visitors have an opportunity to register for worship.

Arriving at EFPC for Worship

- Please do not attend in-person worship if you are experiencing cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, or new loss of taste or smell, have knowingly been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with Covid or been tested for Covid but not received results yet, or if you have traveled in the last 10 days.²
- It is not necessary to conduct onsite temperature measurement for visitors.
- Please read and answer the Covid Wellness Checklist (<https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>) found on the poster outside the doors on the Portico or off the ramp before entering the church.
- Please enter the church Sanctuary by either the front or ramp side door. Please be mindful of anyone exiting the building and give at least 6 feet of space. Both entrances will provide the Covid Wellness Checklist, masks if you are in need of one, and the list of registrants. Please put on your mask prior to entering the sanctuary. If your name is not on the registration list, you may need to wait to see if there is space availability. If there is not, we apologize but you will not be able to attend that Sunday but will have priority for the following Sunday.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>

- o Masks must be always worn properly throughout the building and must be worn by all attendees over the age of 2.
- o Surgical masks will be available for those that forget or do not have a mask that covers both mouth and nose.
- Church doors will be propped open to limit touching and promote air flow.
- Hand sanitizer will be available for use upon entering the church sanctuary.
- Please take a seat in available sections.
 - o Please sit only in pews that are not roped off.
- Both restrooms will be available for use to avoid congregating at one restroom.

During Worship

Congregants will be spaced at least every other row to ensure all maintain the 6' distancing guideline between non family members. Signage will be used to encourage individuals/family groups to space themselves at least 6 feet from others.

- Hosts will orient attendees to signage or floor markings to have one-way aisles or otherwise direct attendees to follow certain pathways for entering and exiting the service.
- Hosts will direct row by row exiting after the service.
- Pews will be roped off so that congregants can maintain 6' distance between non household church goers.
- Congregants should be encouraged to proceed to their seats and remain there throughout the service.
 - If you have little ones that become restless, please use Fellowship Hall or feel free to use the church lawn, maintaining social-distancing at all times indoors and on church grounds.
- Music will be instrumental or pre-recorded (no live singing)
- Communion will be offered only at the online (Zoom) services
- Worshippers are encouraged to contribute their offerings by giving online through the church website. Those who prefer to give by check may mail it to the church or put it in the locked mailbox at the top of the ramp. No physical offering will be collected during in-person worship.
- The service will be limited to <1 hour

After Worship

Cleaning

- The host will clean and sanitize with attention to high-touch surfaces at least after every service.
- Clean spaces and items used by staff or congregants between uses unless those items remain unused for at least 4 days between uses. Spaces that remain empty for at least 4 days do not require special cleaning.
- EFPC will also purchase a disinfecting wand to clean surfaces after service.

Ventilation

- Windows will be cracked open to promote air flow prior to and during the service. The windows will be opened more fully as temperatures warm.
- Church heat will be turned off if ambient temperature is >55F as the heat can create a convection loop.

Communication

- Future modifications in COVID-19 prevention protocol to congregants via email and an updated version will be posted on the website.
- Ask people who are sick or who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 within the past 10 days to not enter, stay home, and follow **CDC quarantine guidelines**.³
- Following contact tracing recommendations, we ask that anyone who attended a service and later tests positive for COVID-19 (within two weeks of attending service) contact the minister or clerk of session with that information and the date they attended worship. Without naming the source, the church office will communicate via email or phone to all who attended worship on the same date that another attendee has tested positive. All attendees will be encouraged to get a COVID 19 test and to stay home (and not attend an upcoming service) until they test negative or have completed quarantine guidelines.
- Post prominent signs at entrances. (<https://www.cdc.gov/screening/paper-version.pdf>)
- If the worship leader is unavailable to lead in-person worship because they are ill – service will be virtual, either with the Pastor or another on-line worship leader, or links for other local online worship services will be shared. If there is not enough time to communicate to those that have registered for in-person worship, the Host should go to church and inform congregants that in-person service will have to be cancelled for the day.

Exposure Response

If someone who attended in-person worship at EFPC tests positive for covid-19 within two weeks, they are asked to notify the clerk of session or the minister. We will then:

- Arrange for cleaning of the church with an outside company
- Notify those who were in attendance the same day using the communication template below. Notifications will be logged with date/time and filed with the church office:
 - *We are writing/calling to inform you that someone who attended in-person worship/event at EFPC on [date] has tested positive for COVID-19. In an abundance of caution, we advise that you follow CDC recommendations for quarantine measures for 10 days and monitor any symptoms, such as fever, new or persistent cough, headache, loss of taste or smell, fatigue and/or stomach issues. More information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.*

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

If you test positive for covid-19 within two weeks of attending an in-person event at EFPC, please notify Aaron Richardson (Clerk of session). If you have any questions, please contact Aaron Richardson @ 215-460-8727 or arichardson@kroff.com

- Church activities will be shut down only if there are multiple people that test positive or show symptoms the week after exposure as per Philadelphia DOH.
- We recommend downloading the PA Covid tracking app available on Android or Apple

Other Considerations

- We recommend getting Covid vaccine when it is available to you.