

St. Paul's UCC in Robesonia  
COVID-19 Re-Open Plan  
(including Plan for Indoor In-Person Worship)  
*Revised: Tuesday, April 13, 2021*

We will not plan on having in-person worship services unless Berks County is in the "Green Phase" as designated by the state. Please note: this does NOT mean that we will be automatically open when we are in the green phase. When in the green phase, we will still be following safety guidelines. The following outlines some of our internal guidelines.

1. Mask wearing will be required.
  - a. Worshipers must wear masks over their mouth and nose while in the building. Masks may only be removed/lifted/lowered briefly by worshipers while socially distant from others. Remember to wash/sanitize hands after touching your mask.
  - b. A "face shield" will not be sufficient for worship participation, as it does not "trap" exhaled moisture in the same way that a "face mask" does. A "face shield" may be worn in addition to a "face mask."
  - c. If someone arrives with no mask or only a face shield, a disposable mask will be issued to them.
  - d. Masks may be removed/lifted briefly while socially distant for consuming the communion elements.
  - e. Wearing masks is required for worshipers who are older than 2 years old.
  - f. The Property Committee shall place clearly marked signs at the entrances indicating the need to wear masks.
2. Social Distancing will be required.
  - a. Pews will be marked off with locations where households can sit.
  - b. Depending upon the size of the household, when there is a cantor, there is seating for 10 households in the nave, plus: pastor, organist, lector, cantor, AV tech, AV trainee, and two ushers. [Additional ushers/greeters, acolyte, children's sermon leader, etc, are all subtracted from the above 10 households]. When there is no cantor, there is seating for three more households in the nave. When there is no cantor and the retractable wall is open, there is seating for three more households.
  - c. We will follow the state's recommended maximum occupancy. Currently, the maximum number of people is 25% capacity while social distancing, which means a maximum of 65 people in the sanctuary (including worship leaders, AV tech, ushers/greeters, etc).
3. Entrance/Exit
  - a. As we will need to count people as they arrive and limit seating, we will only have the middle Pearl Street doors entrance unlocked (the doors that lead to the stairway).
  - b. At the end of Sunday school, the Pearl Street doors closest to the Miller Fellowship Hall will be exit only for dismissing Sunday school students to their parents.
  - c. The other external doors do have crash bars, so persons can exit in an emergency, even if locked.
  - d. All internal hallway doors will be propped open beforehand by the ushers, so that individuals need not touch those doors to gain access.
  - e. For those being dismissed from the adult Sunday school class to worship, a "Do Not Enter" sign will be placed in the hallway leading to the sanctuary until the ushers are ready to receive you. Do not enter the sanctuary until the ushers are ready. Please remain socially distant while waiting.
  - f. Hand sanitizer stations will be placed by the Property Committee at:
    - i. the entrance/exit doors
    - ii. top & bottom doors of the elevator
    - iii. top & bottom of the stairwell
    - iv. sanctuary entrance doorway
    - v. lecturn
    - vi. pulpit
  - g. The Property Committee will ensure proper signage directing worshipers to unlocked doors.
  - h. The Property Committee will mark 8' spacing leading into the sanctuary, to keep worshipers apart as they await their turn to enter the sanctuary.
  - i. Upon entering the building, ushers/greeters will direct worshipers to a pew/table/seat/section. Worshipers must go directly to that pew/table/seat/section and sit only with their family/household. With the exception of using the restroom, worshipers are to remain at their seat until dismissed at the end of worship.
  - j. When the worship service concludes, ushers will direct worshipers to leave pew by pew (or section by section), and worshipers should then directly leave the building.
  - k. Worshipers may NOT socialize by the entrance way, or coat hanger and elevator area, or in the hallway, or in the aisles or walkways before or after worship, as it will interfere with social distancing and make it difficult for people to safely walk by to get to their pew/seat, and for worship leaders to safely walk by in their roles of leading worship.
  - l. Ushers/greeters will dismiss worshipers by pew immediately following worship, so that everyone enters and exits in an orderly fashion. (Likewise, for the Fellowship Hall and Social Hall, worshipers will be dismissed by table, chair, or section immediately following the worship service).
  - m. Worshipers may NOT remain in the building for fellowship after the worship service.

4. Ushers/Greeters
  - a. Scheduled ushers/greeters, with a designated captain and co-captain, will be required at least two weeks in advance by the Worship Committee / Consistory in order for an in-person worship service.
  - b. For an in-person worship service, at least four ushers/greeters need to be scheduled in advance, with at least three present before receiving worshipers.
  - c. For a larger worship attendance, where we might need to have worshipers watch the service on the screen in the fellowship hall, at least five usher/greeters need to be scheduled [two downstairs, two upstairs, and one captain (who can go where needed)].
  - d. For a very large worship attendance, where we might need to have worshipers watch the service on a TV in the old social hall, at least six usher/greeters need to be scheduled [three downstairs (one at the door, one in the fellowship hall, and one in the social hall), two upstairs, and one captain (who can go where needed)].
  - e. The scheduling needs to be done at least two weeks in advance, to help give sufficient time to inform the congregation if the building will or will not be open for in-person worship.
  - f. Ushers/greeters are to wear identifying tags, so that worshipers know to follow their instruction, and understand why the persons serving as ushers/greeters are themselves not going directly to a pew.
  - g. Ushers/greeters need to wipe down surfaces before the beginning and after the end of the worship service, including, but not limited to: door handles and push bars, pew backs and armrests, stairway railings, restroom fixtures and changing tables, elevator buttons, and light switches.
  - h. As there is extra set-up, cleaning, and direction involved, ushers/greeters are to arrive at least 45 minutes in advance of the service.
  - i. Although worship leaders and staff may enter the building at any time, the doors will not be unlocked for worshipers until the usher/greeter team is ready to receive them.
  - j. Ushers/greeters will remind participants of the following:
    - (1) How to wear a mask properly covering their mouth and nose;
    - (2) Keep their mask on throughout the service;
    - (3) Wash/Sanitize hands upon entering; and
    - (4) Not to participate aloud in the singing, unison readings, or responsive readings, but to only do those silently to themselves.
    - (5) This instruction need not be given weekly to worship leaders.
5. Contact Tracing
  - a. Ushers/greeters will take attendance.
  - b. Ushers will create a list with contact information (name, address, phone, and email) of each person who enters (of those for whom we do not already have that contact information) in case we find out that they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19.
  - c. Ushers should note on the attendance list where people sit, for the purpose of contacting individuals of a possible exposure if they were sitting near someone who is later learned to have been positive for COVID.
6. Wash/Sanitize Hands
  - a. Participants are encouraged to wash and/or sanitize frequently.
  - b. Wash/Sanitize hands upon entering and exiting the building.
  - c. When possible use your elbow or hip (rather than your hands to open doors).
7. Restrooms
  - a. Please wash hands thoroughly when using the restrooms.
  - b. Use your elbow, hip, or paper towel to open the restroom door before depositing it in the trash can.
  - c. Leave the lights turned on, so that fewer people are touching the light switches. (Ushers will turn these on before the beginning of worship and off after worship for you).
8. Water Fountains
  - a. The water fountains will be disabled.
9. Greeting & Receiving Line
  - a. No greeting will take place (except for people assisting those who enter).
  - b. There will be no receiving line.
10. Fellowship Hall Seating
  - a. The tables have been rearranged for social distancing between seats.
  - b. At each table there should be either: (1) only one family unit; or (2) up to two individuals sitting at opposite corners of the table.
  - c. With tables and following social distancing, there is seating for up to 15 families, or up to 30 individuals [and a maximum of 50 people (25% capacity)].
  - d. Mask wearing, social distancing, and the same guidelines for worship in the sanctuary are to be observed when worshipping in the fellowship hall and social hall.
11. Social Hall Seating
  - d. Seating in the old social hall is limited to 25 people – chairs must be set up for six foot or more social distancing.

12. Choir Loft
  - a. For the protection of the worship leaders and worshipers, seating is not permitted in the choir loft, except for household members of those worship leaders.
13. Singing
  - a. No congregational or choral singing will take place (even with masks).
  - b. If we use a cantor, the cantor will only sing either: (1) in the nave at the rear thermostat (if less than 25 people); or (2) in a separate room/area (such as behind the closed retractable wall). (This includes any practice/warm-ups before worship).
  - c. If we use a cantor in the sanctuary, no one may sit in the pew section along the retractable wall (the pews between the rear thermostat and the pulpit). The exception being, members of the cantor's household may sit near the cantor (but at least 15 feet from the pulpit).
14. Unison and Responsive Readings
  - a. Any unison or responsive readings found in the bulletin should only be *read silently to yourself*. (The lector and other worship leaders will be reading those sections aloud to a microphone for the benefit of those participating via live stream).
15. Instruments
  - a. String and percussion instrumental music is permitted.
  - b. Live woodwind and brass is not permitted (unless played in a separate room, such as the choir room).
16. Bulletins & Hymnals
  - a. All hymnals and other items will be removed from pews.
  - b. The bulletin will contain all needed information.
  - c. Bulletins (including children's bulletins) must be either:
    - (1) placed in the pews ahead of time by an usher wearing gloves; or
    - (2) handed to an individual by an usher wearing glovesIf there is a hand-to-hand contact, the ushers should wash/sanitize their gloved hand before handing a bulletin to the next person.
  - d. Children should keep (and not return) their boxes of crayons for the children's bulletins
17. Offering
  - a. Offering will not be "taken" but can be placed in a plate or basket as a person enters/exits.
  - b. Members are encouraged to sign up for online giving as the safest way for us to receive an offering during the pandemic.
18. The ushers/greeters will set the HVAC fans for "ON" (as opposed to "off" or "auto") for those sections of the building where people will be worshipping at least 30 minutes prior to the beginning of worship to increase air circulation and reduce air moisture.
19. Worship Leaders
  - a. Each worship leader will have their own microphone.
  - b. No one but the worship leaders should enter the lower or upper chancel area.
  - c. No one but the audio/video tech (and their household) may be at the computer or sound board, unless directed to do so by the audio/video tech.
  - d. Those learning to use the audio/video equipment should be behind the glass doors in the vestibule and wearing a mask.
  - e. The acolyte and cross bearer must wear a mask.
  - f. The pastor, lector, and organist need not wear a mask when in their designated areas (i.e. pulpit, lecturn, altar, their own office, etc), nor will the person leading the children's sermon when on the chancel steps.
  - g. If we use the bell choir, they must be set up for six foot social distancing between each other and the congregation. If using a cantor when we have the bell choir, the cantor may not sing until after the bell choir has packed up and moved out of the area near the cantor.
  - h. Only that week's counting team member should handle the offering plate/basket. (Hands should be washed after touching the plate/basket).
  - i. If there is a third speaker for the worship service, we will use the portable lecturn in the lower chancel for that individual (again, with their own designated microphone).

20. There will be NO food or drink fellowship before or after worship.
21. No Meals will be served in the church building.
  - a. Take out will be permitted for Soup ‘n’ Such; the MFF Committee is responsible to ensure safe and proper food preparation and distribution.
  - b. St. Paul’s Clothing Closet may open at the discretion of the MFF Committee, which is responsible to ensure mask wearing, social distancing, and sanitizing is done properly. Currently the Clothing Closet is by appointment only.
  - c. Fund-raisers involving take out food and drink that are only consumed offsite is permitted; the MFF Committee is responsible to ensure safe and proper food preparation and distribution.
  - d. The guidelines for serving meals outdoors can be found in the “COVID-19 Re-Open Plan for In-Person *Outdoor* Worship.”
22. We will continue to offer Live Streaming and Phone Streaming for our worship services, to provide an alternative to coming to the church building for those who wish or must stay home.
23. Please know that when we do open up for worship:
  - a. We ask that people only come if they feel comfortable doing so.
  - b. Only come if you are feeling well and do NOT have a fever.
  - c. Do not come if you have in the past 14 days you have traveled to or through one of the states listed on Pennsylvania’s quarantine list.
  - d. Do not come if you are unable to wear a cloth mask over both your mouth and nose.
  - e. Do not come if you believe you have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus (and have not yet tested negative) or have had a COVID-19 positive test result, until you meet the following requirements, based on the “CDC’s criteria to discontinue home isolation” and Pennsylvania’s Department of Health.  
As of September 10, 2020 this criteria includes:
    - (1) At least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms or date of COVID-19 positive test; *and*
    - (2) At least 72 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications; *and*
    - (3) Other symptoms of COVID-19 are not severe and are improving.
24. Communion
  - a. We plan to use pre-filled communion cups for participants to consume while in their pew/seat. Masks may be temporarily removed, while social distancing, for the consuming of the communion elements.
25. Healing Services
  - a. We will not use laying on of hands as a part of a healing service until further notice.
  - b. Candle lighting may be done if done with social distancing and no touch contact.
26. Baptisms
  - a. We will give preferential opportunity for seating to the family of the baptized. This means they will be able to sit closer to the front (so as not needing to pass other worshipers), and designated members of their family will be given primary opportunity to fill the above maximum number of participants for indoor worship (minus of course the needed worship leaders).
  - b. Having a baptism as a part of an outdoor worship service is a possibility.
  - c. The pastor will wash/sanitize his hands before and after baptizing the individual.
  - d. Baptized parents of a child will have the option of: (1) holding their own child (not passing the child to the pastor); (2) pouring the water over their own child’s head (after the pastor has consecrated it); (3) laying on of hands for the Holy Spirit; and/or (4) lighting of the baptismal candle. The Pastor will still be offering the words of the sacrament.
  - e. All those above the age of two years old who are participating in the baptism will need to wear a mask. (The Pastor will wear a mask when near the baptized during the sacrament).
  - f. There will be NO presentation of the newly baptized (no carrying the child into the congregation to meet their new church family).
27. Funerals
  - a. See the additional guidelines for funeral/memorial services.
28. Weddings
  - a. Additional guidelines will be developed for wedding ceremonies.
29. Nursery
  - a. Until further notice, nursery will NOT be available for in-person worship.
  - b. The Christian Education Committee shall develop safety policies for the nursery for Consistory approval, prior to resuming nursery.
30. Junior Worship
  - a. The Christian Education Committee shall recommend for Consistory approval an addition to this policy for safely resuming junior worship, prior to resuming that ministry.

31. Sunday School
  - a. See the additional guidelines for Sunday school.
32. Reservations
  - a. For some special worship services we may require reservations. Worship services requiring reservations will be posted on the website.
  - b. Reservations might be required for special services, such as baptisms, prayers of remembrance, All Saints Day, award presentations, Bible presentations, etc to allow for family and friends for the special occasion to be able to be seated in the sanctuary, within the current limits of maximum safe-seating and social distancing capacity.
33. If you choose to socialize with others outdoors before or after worship, please do not do so in front of the doors, please maintain social distancing, and please allow a social distancing space for people to safely walk by you to and from the building and along the sidewalks.
34. If there was a COVID-19 positive individual in the building, those sections will be closed for at least 24 hours before cleaning (preferably at least 72 hours). If possible, those sections will be closed for 7 days.
35. In addition to the usher training for calling first responders, including law enforcement, if worshipers are not following the guidelines and/or the instructions of the ushers, the Pastor has the full support of the Consistory to decline to begin a worship service and/or to conclude any worship service early at any point for safety, including the safety of appropriate social distancing; however, the Consistory is not holding the Pastor as responsible for ensuring that worshipers properly follow social distancing, mask wearing, and church guidelines.
36. This information will be posted on our website, and it will be distributed with the bulletin to those who are joining for indoor worship for the first time since the pandemic began, to help ensure that all are aware of the guidelines.

**\*\*Please note that this plan is subject to change as more information becomes available and changes are happening with respect to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Dated: *April 13, 2021*