

Phase IV: Wider Reopening and New Opportunities

Summary

Phase IV encourages additional opportunities for in-person gatherings while recognizing the ever-changing COVID-19 conditions which will necessitate adjustments to these recommendations when needed. The 8 a.m. Worship Service with Communion will return to Monteith Hall, the 9:30 a.m. Worship Service welcomes the return of the choir, and at 11 a.m. a new Faith Formation for All Ages sees several groups from young to old growing in their faith. Children and Youth programs will expand on Sunday with more opportunities to engage in-person while also taking precautions. An outdoor canopy will be available for groups to use, office hours will expand and the building will be available for groups to use for various activities and ministries during the week.

Technology will continue to provide a vital role for people wishing to remain virtual during this time. Livestreaming will continue with certain improvements, including a new camera capable of streaming from Monteith Hall and improved graphics for the 9:30 a.m. service. Better hybrid options are available for those wishing to meet simultaneously in-person and virtually.

The RRWG will continue to monitor the viral conditions while adhering to the latest recommendations from the CDC, state and county health departments, all the while listening and in conversation with staff, members and larger church community. Vaccinations, masks, social distancing (3 to 6 feet) and hand sanitizer will continue to be important tools until viral conditions improve, which is measured by (but not limited to) the rates of vaccination, test positivity, infection, hospitalization, and death.

The RRWG does want everyone to recognize that participating in in-person activities, particularly indoors, does come with a certain degree of risk. We invite everyone to do their part to reduce everyone's risk by following the latest recommendations regarding getting vaccinated, obtaining a booster shot, wearing masks and social distancing.

If approved by Session during the August 2021 meeting, the RRWG recommends announcing Phase IV in late August with a target start date of September 4 to allow people to review and prepare for the new guidelines.

Communication

Clearly communicate via posted signs, bulletin announcements, bulletin insert, website, email and newsletter the precautions that remain in place to keep members as safe as possible.

Include a disclaimer that some risk still exists when entering the church building despite all safety measures in place.

General Guidelines

Room Preparation:

- Allow for plenty of seating in each room. Consider spacing out seating so people can spread out, depending on numbers.
- Food may be prepared inside the building with every effort made to consume any food outside the building. Eating indoors carries a greater risk of transmitting the virus due to not wearing a mask all the time.
- Weather permitting, open outside windows prior, during and after a meeting to increase ventilation.
- Position fans to expel air outdoors as much as possible; have any exhaust fans run continuously.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available in each room with sanitation stations on each floor.
- Have extra masks on hand for those who do not have one.

Room Cleaning:

- Used rooms should be cleaned daily. Gloves are not required.
- Ideally, a minimum of 1 (one) hour is required between the end of one event and the beginning of the next event in the same room in order to clean and disinfect all surfaces, as well as allow for ventilation.
- Continue to clean each common room daily as more groups use the building.
- Provide hand sanitizer in each room and encourage its use..
- In case there are multiple, multigenerational services on a single day, plan for at least one hour in between services in order to clean, sanitize and ventilate the space. Consider volunteers to help with the cleaning requirements, and a small step approach to modifying cleaning protocols following the latest CDC guidance.

Restrooms:

- All restrooms are available while social distancing is maintained. No more than 1 or 2 households in a restroom at a time is recommended.
- Maintain a daily cleaning schedule for restrooms.
- Post use and cleaning instructions in each restroom.
- Maintain appropriate stock of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels in each restroom.
- As in the rest of the building, all persons using the restroom should be masked.

Room Reservation:

- Groups need to reserve rooms through the Assistant Administrator via online submission or calling the church office.
- Continue to designate groups into three distinct categories: Ministry, Affiliated and Unaffiliated ([as defined in Phase III](#)).
- A strong preference will be given to Ministry Groups and then Affiliate Groups. Nonaffiliated groups may be accommodated on an as-available basis.
- See [Appendix A](#) for Recommended Occupancy and Additional Cleaning Support
- Establish rooms available for use and timeline of when reservations can be made.

Reserving the space must happen ahead of time. The Church Office under the direction of the Office Manager determines who maintains the schedule of building use. This same person would also be the contact person for groups requesting building use.

Building Guidelines

Building Entry

Building Hours

FOBs for members are now activated, allowing each member with a FOB to enter the building during the following hours:

8:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. Monday - Friday

8:30 a.m. - 7 p.m. Saturday

7:15 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday (Building is Unlocked)

Welcome Center Hours

The Welcome Center will be staffed in order to buzz people into the building during the following hours:

9 a.m - 5 p.m. Monday - Thursday

9 a.m - 12 p.m. Friday

During public Saturday events and Sunday mornings, it is highly recommended we have someone at the Welcome Center to be hospitable to those entering the building and as another line of safety.

Appointments or group calendar reservations are appreciated and can be made online or by calling the church office. Those entering the church should follow all social distancing and hygiene guidelines.

Updated Mask Policy

- Outside on Church Grounds: Masks are optional for all persons.

- **Inside the Church Building: All individuals are expected to wear masks inside the church building.**
- *Whether outside or inside, please continue to follow recommended guidelines, including maintaining social distancing of 3 to 6 feet and sanitizing hands frequently.*
- Have a supply of masks available for those who arrive at the church without one and need to wear one based on current protocol.
- Train staff and volunteers on how to respond to a person entering the church who is not compliant with recommended behaviors (wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, not using the sign-in method, etc.).

Updated Vaccination Policies

- Per personnel, all First Pres staff will be required to be fully vaccinated by September 30, 2021.
- The RRWG recommends all eligible persons get vaccinated in consultation with their medical professional, including booster shots where advised.

Updated Sign-In System

- A sign-in system is recommended during normal office hours
- The Welcome Center person will ask standard COVID-19 screening questions
- The Welcome Center person will check-in staff members and record contact information from any visitors to the building.

Staff Guidelines

Staff are encouraged to work onsite during Phase IV and attend meetings in-person unless virtual or hybrid methods are arranged ahead of time. Staff should monitor their own symptoms and work remotely when necessary or out of precaution. If a staff member has potentially been exposed to COVID-19 but not experiencing symptoms, the person should wear a mask and get tested if possible, but the person does not have to isolate. Should a staff member experience COVID-19 symptoms, the person should isolate and get tested as soon as possible, as well as notify our parish nurse.

Staff working in the building should continue following current CDC social distancing guidelines:

- Masks should be worn at this time unless in an office alone.
- Continue to follow other social distancing guidelines, including:
 - Maintaining six feet of separation between individuals
 - Regular handwashing and sanitizer use
 - Check-In and check-out each time entering and exiting the building

Life in the Church Guidelines

Small Groups

First Pres continues to offer gathering spaces for small groups, committees and affiliated ministry groups who would substantially benefit with in-person contact while also weighing the risks of such a gathering.

Groups may meet in-person at the church. Groups should reserve space ahead of time online or by calling the church office. Groups meeting indoors are expected to wear masks. Groups meeting outdoors have the option to not wear masks. Food is recommended outside only as long as masking is expected indoors.

The possibility of hybrid meetings is now available, with training offered by our technology coordinator. Most groups will need to bring their own laptop and indicate they would like a meeting to be hybrid ahead of time in order to make the necessary arrangements. A presentation style meeting can probably be arranged, but we encourage groups who have some members wanting to meet virtually, to continue to utilize Zoom for their meetings so everyone can participate.

Those meeting during weekday times will be

- Buzzed in by Welcome Center volunteer
- Give name/ contact info / time in and time leaving building
- Attest to good health and no recent contact with a Covid+ person.
- Attendee agrees to contact the church if they should become ill and/or test positive in the next 3 - 5 days.
- It is expected all persons will wear a mask while in the building, regardless of vaccination status.

Those meeting after hours should:

- Ensure everyone wears a mask while in the building.
- Allow people into the building who do not have a FOB.
- Keep an attendance of all those at the meeting.
- Attest that each person is in good health with no recent COVID-19 exposure or symptoms.
- Remind each person to contact the church if they should test positive in the next 3 - 5 days.
- Share attendance record with the parish nurse should contact tracing be necessary.

Other Requirements for in-person meetings:

- **Maintain Social Distance:** All members must observe social distancing measures at all times, including staying 3 to 6 feet apart whenever possible, no physical contact and wearing a mask at all times.

- **Handouts:** Email agendas and other material ahead of time so that people can use their personal electronic device as much as possible. Physical handouts are single use.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** It is recommended members wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the building.
- **Food:** As long as masks are to be worn indoors, it is not recommended to consume food indoors at this time. Food may be prepared indoors as long as masks are worn and proper food preparation procedures followed. Food may be served and consumed outside where masks are optional. There is an exception for Communion; please see worship section.

Room Capacities During COVID-19

Room capacities have been lifted in Phase IV, although it is still recommended to give people adequate space (3 feet or so, or a chair or two in between, for instance) to comfortably move around a room without physical contact.

Worship

Guidelines for Worship:

Everyone is welcome to worship in-person and online! We want to welcome everyone back to the church grounds and building as we expand opportunities and continue to reopen the church. Please know that participating in in-door activities continues to come at some level of risk and online worship services will remain a viable option as we move forward. Wherever possible, use creative ways to connect the on-line and in-person service.

Recommendations for Worship in Phase IV: Adjusting Our Worship Practices

- **Online worship:** Online worship livestream Sunday service at 9:30 will continue to be available and should be considered the 'main' worship service.
- **Sign-up for worship services:** Sign up is no longer needed for worship services
- **In-person Worship** service at 9:30 Sunday morning will continue in the Sanctuary. We will continue to monitor the number of individuals attending worship but to date the number has not exceeded the maximum indoor guidelines from the CDC, State of Michigan and Washtenaw County.
- **8:00 a.m. Worship with Communion** will begin on Sunday, September 12. Please leave 1-2 seats apart from other households. Begin with Communion in prepackaged kits.
- **Taize** will begin to offer in-person worship once per month beginning September 2021 in Monteith Hall and streamed online via YouTube and Facebook.
- **Doors** in the sanctuary should be propped open whenever possible to avoid members touching doors as they enter and promote airflow.
- **Windows** should be amply propped open whenever possible to promote fresh airflow.
- **Social Distancing** should still be followed according to the latest CDC recommendations.

- **Seating:** Households/pods may sit together. At least one section of the sanctuary should be designated for those attending who would prefer to maintain social distance. Ushers are encouraged to use their discretion and make available these options as needed.
- **Masks:** At this time all those attending in-person worship must wear masks, with the exception of children under 2 or those with a documented health condition. Masked worship leaders may continue to remove masks when leading worship and replace masks when finished, all the while maintaining proper social distance.
- **Singing:** There is congregational singing in the Sanctuary with a mask. Any person may choose to sing outdoors without a mask when socially distanced from others.
- **Elevator use:** Whenever possible, limit use to one member/pod or household unit on the elevator at a time.
- **Restrooms:** Whenever possible, limit use to 1-2 households at a time.
- **Greeters and ushers** may need to remind worship participants about the guidelines and state requirements, including wearing masks at this time. Ushers may designate certain spaces for larger households, especially families, who may want to remain socially distanced at this time.
- **Bulletins:** The order of worship services may be followed using single-use bulletins to be picked up rather than handed out.
- **Choir:** The Chancel Choir begins singing in worship on August 15. They will be required to wear masks when singing. Singers must be vaccinated as well.
- **Orchestras:** Instrumental music is encouraged. Wind instruments should have proper mitigation elements in place, including masking of musicians and instruments as appropriate, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- **Spoken responses** by the congregation are encouraged at normal voice levels with masks on.
- **Passing of the Peace:** It is still recommended there be no physical touching during the passing of the peace, including hand shakes, fist bumping or elbow touching. Other non-contact methods are encouraged, such as bowing, waving, a thumbs up, one's own hands clasped together, etc. In order to maintain social distancing at this time, congregants should do all their greetings to others from where they are seated.
- **Offering:** No passing of an offering plate through the pews at this time. Encourage worshippers to offer financial gifts online or drop off at a stationary offertory plate as they come in or out of the sanctuary.
- **Communion:** Communion may be served by masked servers (Sanctuary) or with communion kits (Monteith). Consider other opportunities to avoid communal contact. Members may take communion after receiving it or at a later time of their choosing. It is recommended to put your mask back on before speaking or singing. The risk appears to be minimal to temporarily remove one's mask to take communion.
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- **Coffee Hour:** Online coffee hour should continue on a monthly basis on the last Sunday of the month and be encouraged to help connect members at that time. Offer an in-person "coffee hour" outside on the church terrace, front steps or under a canopy for

those attending in-person worship, while maintaining social distance guidelines as much as possible.

- Suggested Language:
 - Coffee Hour: outdoors with food and drink
 - Social Hour: indoors without food or drink
- Food policy may be revisited when masking indoors is no longer recommended by the CDC for vaccinated persons in substantial or high risk areas.
- **Cleaning** should include a thorough disinfection and airing out of the sanctuary in between uses, following the current CDC cleaning guidelines.

Special Services Requirements:

Weddings Guidelines

- Without a choir or choral ensemble, there is additional seating available for people attending weddings.
- All guests are expected to wear masks. Certain exceptions for bridal party can be arranged with RCT.
- Request individuals who are ill or unvaccinated individuals exposed to a Covid-positive person not attend.
- Recommend having two wedding coordinators to manage guests / crowd control.
- Consider if additional fees are necessary and communicate appropriately with all parties involved.
- Livestreaming may be available for an additional fee.
- **Mask guidelines:** *Following current CDC guidelines, everyone should wear a mask at all times when in the church building. Temporary exceptions are allowed for brief speaking parts and picture taking.*
- **Social Distancing:** All parties should remain socially distanced from other households/pods, washing hands frequently. Physical touch is discouraged.
- **Getting Ready:** Bridal party allowed to dress and get ready in the building. The bride will have use of the Curtis & Founder Rooms. The groom will have use of the Lewis & Vance Rooms. Please continue to practice social distance.

Memorial Services:

- **Mask guidelines:** *Following current CDC guidelines, everyone should wear a mask at all times when in the church building. Temporary exceptions are allowed for speaking parts.*
- **Social Distancing:** All parties should remain socially distanced from other households/pods, washing hands frequently. Physical touch is discouraged.
- Streaming may be made available in conjunction with technology team.

Baptisms:

May be pre-recorded as in previous phases or be a part of Sunday morning worship services under the auspices outlined above for indoor worship services. Families may all sit together, preferably near the front of the Sanctuary. Everyone should maintain social distancing guidelines including wearing a mask for anyone over 2. Encourage extended family to watch the livestream.

Sunday morning Children's programs

General Guidelines for Children's Spaces (those under 12):

- Schedule additional CCG persons on Sunday mornings to setup and clean spaces, especially where children will be present..
- Ideally allow for one hour or more between events to allow for additional cleaning and ventilation.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (80% at 160 proof) dispensers placed near every entrance.
- Make the 9:30 a.m. worship service as family friendly as possible, such as:
 - Opportunities to lead worship for families, children and youth
 - Appropriate language, movement and activity in worship for children
 - Masking at all times, including when singing
 - Exception: Leader is speaking from a socially distanced location
 - Leader should remain masked when leading Time with Young Disciples
 - Worship Lab for Children (9:50 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.)
 - Hold in a well-ventilated area, either Monteith or Outside under Canopy
 - Everyone is masked, regardless of vaccination status
- Sunday School (11:00 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.)
 - Hold in a well-ventilated area, either Monteith or Outside under Canopy
 - Everyone is masked, regardless of vaccination status

As much as possible, plan for All Ages of Faith Formation to have in-person opportunities, with optional online components as needed.

- Consider a delayed start to on-site Sunday School to see how children returning to in-person school goes. Learn best practices and then adapt accordingly. This also allows families to adapt in stages to the new framework for school and then church.
- Remain updated on best practices of other churches beginning in-person children's programs.
- Determine all new COVID-specific protocols for social distancing and need for masks in Children's areas
- Follow **CDC recommendations** for schools:
 - Maintain 3 feet of social distance between persons
 - Suggestion: utilize the towels as a way to separate student work areas
 - Wear a mask at all times, regardless of age or vaccination status
 - If any student or family member shows symptoms of COVID-19, s/he should remain home

- Any **food** should be individually served, either as:
 - Individual baggies that can be taken home with children
 - Any communal eating should be done outside
- **Volunteers:**
 - Train all volunteers prior to beginning the program on all new precautions.
 - All volunteers should be fully vaccinated and wear masks.
- **Send out new protocols** and precautions to young families to alert them to new procedures
- When Pre-school and children areas do open, consider pre-registering to plan for how many can be in one room. (See suggested [Room Capacities](#) above)
- **Consider extra volunteers** when you first open Sunday School areas to answer questions and supply directions. It is also important to limit the number of people in contact with children, so take into consideration safety as well as hospitality.
- Consider a **check-in area** to sign-in all children who are involved in children's programs. Utilize visual reminders to keep household spread apart. Contactless methods encouraged.
- Ensure each room used is cleaned at least once daily.

Formation

While the risk to children appears to be somewhat lower, those children under 12 are still not eligible to get vaccinated. There is an ongoing risk of carrying the virus back home and sharing with other family members. When outside, masks are not required (but are recommended) and social distancing guidelines will be followed. When inside, masks should be worn at all times.

Outdoor programming in small-medium size groups wearing masks while maintaining social distance may be considered. Please submit any activity requests to the RCT if uncertain.

Indoor programming should allow for ample space for movement. All persons should wear masks when indoors while viral rates remain at a substantial or high rate.

A priority should be placed on in-person events, while also acknowledging that virtual events may be more suitable for a given group.

Service and Outreach:

Deacons: Contactless delivery and pickup of cards, flowers, gifts, communion elements etc. Pastoral visits outside are encouraged! Masks are recommended for any indoor visits. Deacons should also continue to make regular phone calls and send emails. Connection is desirable!

Stephen Ministers: As these are one-to-one hour-long meetings between an SM and a care-receiver, each SM and CR will make decisions based on gathering together in-person. We recommend in-person indoor gatherings only if both are fully vaccinated. Inside if masked or outside if unmasked is acceptable if both are fully vaccinated.

Volunteers should wear a mask and utilize either gloves or hand sanitizer / handwashing frequently, while also practice social distancing measures at all times when volunteering in person. At-risk populations should consider what precautions are in place and make their own risk assessment for volunteer activities.