



Covenant Presbyterian Church

**PLAN FOR RETURNING TO IN-PERSON
WORSHIP SERVICE
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**PRESENTED BY THE COVENANT WORSHIP SERVICES
PLANNING TEAM
OCTOBER 7, 2021**

COVENANT WORSHIP SERVICES PLANNING TEAM

Lakesha Bradshaw Easter

Pastor

Sue McLaurin

Moderator

Session Members

- **Barbara Blue**
- **George Brothers**

Committee on Health Ministry

- **George Brothers**
- **Carlton Pyant**

Trustee Board

- **Karen Andrews**
- **George Scott**
- **Lawrence Taylor**

Usher Board

- **Paula Spaulding**

Worship Services

- **Yolanda Ford**
- **Pastor Lakesha**
- **Sandra Meachem**
- **Brenneta Simpson**

Audio-Visual Technology Team

- **Weldon Bullock**
- **Charles Clifton**
- **James Heyward**

At-large Members

- **Kwadwo Caesar**
- **Kimberly McClain**
- **Donna Russau**
- **Paula Spaulding**

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- **Rev. Dr. Homer Ashby**

COVENANT WORSHIP SERVICES PLANNING TEAM GOALS

- 1. To utilize scientific knowledge, healthy practices, and governmental regulations** regarding the COVID -19 virus to keep worshippers informed of the safety and threats of the pandemic.
- 2. To make changes and modifications in the worship services that make it safe, healthy, and appropriate for individuals to attend in-person and/or online worship** for the coming months during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. To determine best practices for making the worship site safe and reduce risks of COVID-19 virus transmission for worshippers.**
- 4. To apply technical support and to purchase and retrofit audio-visual equipment** to make the worship services appropriate for those who worship at home or in-person.

INTRODUCTION

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). So begins the account of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in the book of Acts.

As we approach the nineteenth month of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have come to understand that it may not be possible for the members of Covenant to be “all together in one place”. While some restrictions are being lifted, the ongoing threat of the Covid-19 global pandemic and the new Delta variant will require that we return to the church building in a way that is measured and mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable among us. Some may be ready to attend in-person worship, yet we know that some will continue to worship at home.

We give thanks, then, for the promise of our faith—that the Lord God will bless and keep us, the risen Christ is with us, and the Holy Spirit connects us with believers near and far. As we carefully track the news in these times—with numbers of new cases, numbers of persons who have transitioned, and numbers of those who are recovering—we remember the good news of the gospel: *“And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47)*. As Covenant resumes in-person worship, in the spirit of constant prayer, and with complete trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, know that we do so after a careful process of discussion and discernment, with consideration of the best scientific knowledge at our disposal.

But, of course, we may make mistakes along the way. There will undoubtedly be uncomfortable moments as we adjust to new practices. There will be times of frustration, disappointment, and even grief. But let us utilize countless opportunities to exercise the spiritual gifts of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. While we witness God’s blessings, there will be beautiful surprises, joy, and moments of deep fulfillment. Let us perceive the new thing God is doing, even now. We will have opportunities to celebrate the spiritual gifts of love, joy, peace, generosity, and faithfulness.

Let us be faithful, then—to God and to one another—as we receive the gifts and work through this time as God’s Covenant people, led by the gospel of truth, responsive to the Spirit, and open to the grace of God. Finally, we will remember that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus!

Spiritual health and joy,

Pastor Lakesha Bradshaw-Easter
Covenant Presbyterian Church

POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES

During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Delta variant, churches planning to reopen will have to consider not just how to keep congregants safe, but also how to make them feel welcome. Safety is a top priority; however, exploring new ways for making it possible for congregants to express their Christian beliefs and values and experience the presence and comfort of God is of utmost importance.

The following guidelines for policies and best practices were created by the Worship Services Planning Team for presentation to the Session for approval. The following practices are strongly recommended by the Team:

- Members, friends, and visitors of Covenant are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated.
- If assistance is needed with the vaccination process, please contact members of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Committee on Health Ministry.
- If you or a household member have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive, or if you have tested positive for COVID-19, you should not attend in-person worship.
- While on Covenant Presbyterian Church premises, vaccinated and non-vaccinated participants shall wear masks at all times. If you do not have a mask, masks are available at the entrance of the church building.
- Social distancing of at least 6 feet of separation while attending in-person worship service is encouraged.

Returning to In-Person Worship During the COVID-19 Virus and Delta Variant

- The following guidelines for returning to in-person worship were based on recommended guidelines from the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), best practices from the PCUSA, local county Health Department and information from health and scientific publications. As knowledge and information increase, the guidelines may change to reflect current science and health best practices and metrics.
- According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services “Any place where people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Therefore, all entities that congregate people in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission”. The goal is to “do no harm” by minimizing the spread of COVID-19 and preventing outbreaks of COVID-19 in the Covenant Presbyterian Church congregation and community.

PRACTICES IN PREPARATION FOR THE IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICE

- 1. Testing:** If you have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, you must refrain from in-person worship until after 14 days have passed since your symptoms began, or the date of your exposure, or after obtaining a negative test. If you or anyone in your household tests positive for COVID-19 within two weeks of attending a worship service in person, please notify the pastor or a member of the Committee on Health Ministry. It is imperative so that we can not only pray for you but contract trace and inform others to get tested.
- 2. Registration:** Everyone planning on attending worship must sign-up and notify the church that they are planning to attend by clicking the registration link sent with the weekly e-news or calling the church office at 919--682-1484.
 - Congregants are asked to register because social distancing in the pews reduces the number of available seats. Please sign-up no later than noon Friday if you plan to attend on Sunday. Everyone will be asked to sign a waiver form.
 - Members, visitors, and guests who have not pre-registered will be screened at the main entrance to the narthex.
 - The registration information provided will be made available to Ushers and Trustees to gain entrance into the narthex.
- 3. Do a Self Check:** Before leaving for worship on Sunday, everyone is invited to review the questions below. Individuals answering yes to any of the questions should stay home and join us online.
 - Have you or anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days: sore throat, cough, chills, body aches for unknown reasons, shortness of breath for unknown reasons, loss of smell, loss of taste, or fever?
 - Have you or anyone in your household traveled in the past 14 days?
 - Have you or anyone in your household cared for an individual who is in quarantine or is a presumptive positive or has tested positive for COVID-19?
 - Do you have any reason to believe you or anyone in your household has been exposed to or acquired COVID-19?
 - To the best of your knowledge, have you been close to any individual who tested positive for COVID-19?
- 4. Worship service arrival time:** To observe the social distance recommendations, please arrive with plenty of time to enter in an orderly fashion. Doors will be open 30 minutes before service. Ushers will be stationed at the sanctuary doors to assist those who need help with mobility.
- 5. Christian Education:** All Christian Education Programs will remain online or have a hybrid model format. Adult Sunday School, Wednesday Evening Bible Study, Youth Group, and Tuesday Morning Prayer. Children's Sunday School will only offer an online option.

6. **Masks:** Congregants will be asked to bring a mask from home and wear a mask from the time they leave their vehicles until they return to their cars after worship. Masks will be provided for anyone who forgets theirs. Masks are required **THE ENTIRE TIME** during the worship service and occupancy of the building. Anyone who cannot or will not wear a mask will be invited to enjoy the worship service online.
7. **Signage:** Signage will denote information and will designate directions for moving throughout the building. Trustees and Ushers will provide additional guidance as needed.
8. **Sanitizers:** No-touch disinfectant dispensers will be located and positioned for congregants to use while in the building. Sanitizer bottles will be placed on the registration table for use by registrants prior to entering the building.
9. **Nursery:** The nursery will be open for nursing parents or if a child has a need for special care. However, we will not have a nursery service or children's Sunday School in the building until it becomes safer and vaccinations are made available to children under 12.

PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

Entering the Church and Sanctuary

All congregants must enter the main door of the building after exiting their cars.

- There will be "no entry signs" posted on the door of the Administration wing of the building.
- Signs that masks are required will be posted on both doors when you enter the building.
- A table with masks, screening questionnaire, and hand sanitizer will be located outside of the building. Screening questions will be laminated and used during registration as needed.
- A person from the Trustee Board, Usher Board or the Committee on Health Ministry will be near the table for assistance if needed.
- Congregants will either show a pre-screen check completion on their phone or answer "no" to all questions on the screening instrument. Anyone with "yes" answers on the questionnaire will be pulled aside and a Committee on Health Ministry member will be called to triage.
- If too many people are waiting to pass through the screening process, they should form a line down the covered walkway of at least 6-foot intervals. After a person or group is screened, they may enter the church.
- Masked and screened congregants and guests may then enter through the main door.
- When entering the Narthex, a station manned by an Usher will direct the congregants to sign in order to provide a record of attendance for future contact if needed.
- A hand sanitizing station will be placed at this point and individuals will be encouraged to use it prior to entering the sanctuary.
- One-way arrows and 6-foot spacing designations for social distancing will be placed on the floor in the Narthex.

- After sign-in, a congregant will be directed to another Usher who will escort the individual or family into the sanctuary where they will be seated in appropriately marked off pew rows and seats.
- The center aisle will be used solely for entering and the side aisles solely for exiting from the sanctuary.
- There will be no entrance from the two side doors next to the main double door of the sanctuary. Appropriate signage and floor markings showing traffic flow will be posted.
- Those needing to use the restroom facility will need to exit from the Sanctuary from the side aisles through either of the two single doors at the back of the church and then proceed to the restrooms.
- Trustees and Ushers are available to assist congregants as needed.

BEST PRACTICES DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICES

1. **Seating:** Congregants will not all be able to sit where they like. The Sanctuary has been measured carefully for seating arrangements, and the pews are cordoned off. **HOUSEHOLD UNITS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO SIT TOGETHER.** Congregants will be able to only sit with the people they live with while in the Sanctuary, even if they share the same last name. This practice seeks to assure that the spread of the virus will be limited. Thus, individuals need to adhere to this for safety and respect for others. Congregants are strongly encouraged to stay in their pew and to avoid the temptation to move around the sanctuary.
2. **Bulletins/Hymnals:** Bulletins for the worship service will not be provided and Hymnals will be removed from the Sanctuary. A worship document will be available in the weekly e-news. Those who are able should print a copy or bring a digital device to follow the order of worship.
3. **Proclamation, Prayers, and Announcements:** This part of the worship service will essentially remain the same, except there will no longer be a call out for the people's prayers. All prayer concerns and announcements should be sent to the pastor or church administrator by Thursday before Sunday service to be shared in worship. The Pastor, with assistance from the Liturgist, will implement changes during the worship services as needed.
4. **Children's Message:** Children are always welcome to worship at Covenant Presbyterian Church! The children's message will be continued, but they will remain seated with their families.
5. **Singing:** Because singing can quickly spread the virus, there will not be congregational singing, even with masks. If the guidance on this activity changes, this part of the decision will be revisited. For now, special music at every service will be provided, which may incorporate soloist, duets, instrumental, and other creative ways to praise God. Preparations to project hymns and other related material as necessary are in process. Members and friends will encouraged to enjoy the music of the service; and they can plan to hum along if they choose.
6. **Fellowship:** Enjoy the presence of one another. As we pass the Peace of Christ, wave, smile, make the sign of the Cross. Please do not embrace, hug, kiss, or elbow-bump anyone but for immediate family members you are seated next to.

7. **Offering.** Upon entry and exit, there will be offering plates available for the offering. Online giving or mailing in offerings is still welcome.
8. **The Lord's Supper:** On the Sundays, when Holy Communion is observed, congregants will receive upon entry pre-sealed elements as they enter the sanctuary (with limited contact). After Communion, please place used pieces back in your sealed bag and take them with you to discard. Do not place them in the pews for later clean up.

After Worship Service

Fellowship meals or gathering for meetings after service will not be offered. In addition, congregants will be asked to refrain from visiting other building areas during or after worship.

Exiting the Sanctuary and the Church

- At the end of the service, Ushers will dismiss the congregants by each row.
- Congregants who are seated on the piano side of the church should exit from the door leading to the outside canopied walkway.
- Congregants seated on the opposite side will exit from the door leading to the hallway.
- Those exiting from the hallway door will continue walking down the hall through the church, turn right and exit through the door of the administrative wing of the church.
- There will be no exit through the Narthex entry.

Conclusion

Because of the changing situations of the COVID-19 virus and the Delta variant and the unpredictability of their status, congregants are being asked to be patient with this process. These guidelines will be subject to change in order to coincide with an increase in knowledge about the pandemic. The Committee on Health Ministry will be taking the lead to inform the congregation about those changes.

In the meantime, these guidelines were developed in a spirit of Christian unity to assure that worshippers will have a safe environment to worship whether they are worshipping online or in the Sanctuary at Covenant.

Postscript

The Committee on Health Ministry will continue to be providing timely and current information on the COVID-19 virus and its variants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Durham County Health Department, the local teaching hospitals, Presbyterian Church (USA) and publications from researchers and scientists who are knowledgeable about the status of the pandemic. Any concerns regarding in-person or online worship services will be shared with the Session

Information may include updates from CDC and other sources on the Covid-19 virus that may include:

- Significant changes in the status of the Covid-19 pandemic, both locally and nationally
- Recommendations for Booster shots
- Local sites for vaccinations
- Specific information on the Delta variant
- Vaccine mandates
- Getting a COVID test for travel
- Covid-19 tests and vaccination data

APPENDIX A

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Durham, NC



Through our faith in the Triune God, the Mission of Covenant Presbyterian Church is to lead people to a relationship with Christ by preaching, teaching and healing.

Dear Member, Visitor or Friend,

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. As a result, federal, state, and local governments and agencies recommend social distancing and have, in many locations, prohibited the congregation of groups of people. We are doing everything we can to be compliant with all regulations and ensure your safety. We have put in place preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but We cannot guarantee that you or your family members will not become infected with COVID-19.

By participating in programs, services, and activities of **Covenant Presbyterian Church**, you agree to the following:

On behalf of yourself and your children, you hereby issue a release not to sue, discharge, and hold harmless **Covenant Presbyterian Church**, its employees, agents, and representatives, of and from all liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs, or expenses of any kind arising out of or relating to your participation in our programs, services, or activities. You understand and agree that this release includes any claims based on the actions, omissions, or negligence of this organization, its employees, agents, and representatives, whether a COVID-19 infection occurs before, during, or after participation in any such program, service, or activity.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Date:

Names of Minor Family Members (if any):

APPENDIX B

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Durham, NC



Through our faith in the Triune God, the Mission of Covenant Presbyterian Church is to lead people to a relationship with Christ by preaching, teaching and healing.

REGISTRATION FOR THIS SUNDAY IS OPEN!

Self Check: Before attending worship on Sunday, review the questions below. Individuals answering yes to any of the questions should stay home and join us online at cpcdurham.org.

- Have you or anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
- Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days: sore throat, cough, chills, body aches for unknown reasons, shortness of breath for unknown reasons, loss of smell, loss of taste, or fever?
- Have you or anyone in your household traveled in the past 14 days?
- Have you or anyone in your household cared for an individual who is in quarantine or is a presumptive positive or has tested positive for COVID-19?
- Do you have any reason to believe you or anyone in your household has been exposed to or acquired COVID-19?
- To the best of your knowledge, have you been close to any individual who tested positive for COVID-19?
- I/we will wear a mask while in the sanctuary and church building.
- I/we will keep social distancing and honor seating by ushers.
- I/we will maintain individual hygiene (use of sanitizer).
- I/we will notify the church office if symptoms emerge within ten days of participation. (919)682-1484 administation@cpcdurham.org

By making this reservation, I/we agree to follow the practices listed above to respect and protect our community while returning to in-person worship.

Your First Name

Your Last Name

Your Email

Your Phone #

Indicate the number of people who will attend this service and be seated together:
(Please include yourself in this count.)

Let us know who is coming with you! (If applicable.)