

## Paoli Presbyterian Church - COVID 19

### Plan for moving from Yellow to Green

Effective June 26, 2020 Chester County will move to the Green Phase of disease-mitigation. More restrictions will be lifted, but extreme caution is still encouraged: vulnerable individuals are to continue sheltering in place; and substantial social-distancing, mask-wearing, increased hygiene, and intensified sanitation measures are still necessary in order to keep everyone healthy and safe.

During the Green Phase, the medical experts tell us that any gatherings may bring still increased risk to others and ourselves. Needed accommodations will be cumbersome, costly, and open to human error. There may be a resurgence of the virus and the need for more sheltering-in-place.

The process of resuming and increasing in-person activities will be much more gradual and complex—less like flipping a light switch and more like sliding a dimmer. Over the next few months, there will be more opportunities for groups to gather in person—but they won't look the same as they did a few months ago.

As this congregation begins to resume public activities, please know that we will do so through a careful process of discussion and discernment, with an abundance of caution and concern for those who are most vulnerable, upon consideration of the best scientific knowledge at our disposal, in the spirit of constant prayer, and with full trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

We may make mistakes along the way. There will surely be awkward moments as we adjust to new protocols and practices. There will be times of frustration, disappointment, and grief. We will have countless opportunities to exercise the spiritual gifts of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

But there will also be blessings. There will be wonderful surprises, great celebrations, and moments of deep satisfaction. We will get to see glimpses of the new thing God is doing, even now. We will have opportunities to savor 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 the challenges of this time in the life of our congregation and world. Let us be

guided by the Word, responsive to the Spirit, and open to the grace of God. Let us remember that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus.

### General Guidelines

In order to follow our state-mandated guidelines and in the spirit of keeping all people safe, as our church moves into the Green Phase of COVID-19, we will uphold the following safety measures at all times.

1. We will encourage our more vulnerable populations (the elderly and those with known medical conditions) to continue to shelter in place and engage in worship, discipleship and mission with us from home. We will also ask that any person feeling sick or showing any symptoms of sickness remain home until all symptoms have cleared.
2. All people entering the building must wash hands or use hand sanitizer upon entry, after bathroom visits, and after sneezing or coughing
3. During all gatherings, people must be spaced at least 6 feet apart
4. Throughout all gatherings, all people must wear proper protective face masks
5. Contingency plans need to be made to include those individuals who cannot or do not yet feel comfortable participating in group gatherings
6. Any person using the building needs to receive prior approval and communicate the following information to the church staff...
  - a. All rooms visited so that proper cleaning and sanitation of the building can happen before and after each use
  - b. All people in attendance of each gathering
  - c. Any person who gets sick after any gathering

### Cleaning/Sanitation Guidelines

During the church closure, touched surfaces have been regularly cleaned and building systems have been maintained. Upon notification of reopening and before regular activities resume, the church's outside cleaning vendor will perform a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of the building utilizing CDC guidelines and EPA approved products for use against COVID-19. Cleaning staff will disinfect all services in the office and other used areas of the church on a daily basis: tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.

## Gathered Worship

Based on the guidance we have been given for entering into the Green Phase, we have decided that we will continue to wait to regather for in-person Sunday worship for a little while longer. Safety concerns; cleaning demands between services; the limitations of our space to accommodate large groups with physical distancing; and the infrastructure required to invite people into the building (pre-registration to attend; seating instructions; bathroom use; personal safety and hygiene equipment) are all reasons why this is just not yet the time for us to worship in person.

When we do re-gather, there will be new guidelines for worship that will include (but not be limited to)...

- Attendance will be **capped at 175** to allow for social distancing between family units.
- We strongly encourage those in the "at-risk" group for contracting Covid-19 to continue to worship with us online.
- We ask that anyone who is or has recently been sick, had a fever, or shown any symptoms similar to COVID-19 continue to worship online at home.
- The Session asks and expects **all attenders to wear a mask** or face shield while on church property. If you are unwilling to wear a mask, we ask that you continue worshipping online at home. You may bring your own or we will have masks available for any who need them.
- **We will hold a "touch-less" service:** there will be no bulletins, offering plates will be by the door and not passed, greeters will not shake hands, exterior doors and doors into the sanctuary will be kept open so each family does not have to open them. Every effort will be made to sanitize high contact surfaces in the building after each service. Attendees are also strongly encouraged to wash hands and to bring and use hand sanitizer regularly while here.
- There will be **no choral or congregational singing**. A recent study notes that congregational singing is one of the most aggressive ways to spread a disease by distributing fluid particles in the air. In order to reduce this risk, we will not be engaging in choral congregational singing for the foreseeable future.
- We will seek to offer music for worship in a variety of safe ways. This may include pre-recorded videos, singers/wind instruments singing/playing behind a plexiglass shield while maintaining at least 20 feet distance from other people; non-wind instruments being played.
- On **Communion Sundays**, pre-packaged communion elements will be made available to worshippers
- **Those attending are asked to social distance before and after the service.** We ask that people exit immediately after the service and hold conversations outside or in cars. We want to fellowship together as God's people while submitting to medical recommendations and mitigating risk in the process.

**For now, our online worship will continue as it has since March. We will create and compile worship elements ahead of time to be made available online every Sunday.**

### Children's Ministry

It is very difficult for children to follow our General Guidelines. Children under 2 are not allowed to wear masks and most children have a very hard time staying 6 feet apart. For these reasons, we are encouraging our Children's Ministry to remain socially-distanced during the beginning of the Green Phase. Materials will be made available to children and families to participate in worship, attend VBS online and engage in relationships with God and one another through a variety of means. We will continue to monitor best practices and will communicate when we will be able to resume in-person children's ministries.

### Student Ministry

Because of the benefit of in-person relational connection for Middle and High School Students and their ability to follow our General Guidelines, we will allow for Student Ministry groups to gather in person as our staff see fit during the Green Phase. Some ministry will happen in person and some will continue online.

### Adult Ministry

For the benefit of relational connection, groups will be permitted to gather in person, as long as participants can follow the General Guidelines. Groups such as Small Groups, Bible studies and other fellowship groups may gather either in the church building or at remote locations. For those adults who do not or cannot gather in person, online opportunities will also still be made available.

### Meetings

We have actually seen a benefit from moving our church business meetings to an online format. More members have been able to participate in these meetings through this medium than typically have before when they were only available in person. Through the Green Phase, we will continue to encourage church business meetings

(Deacons, Session and committees) to meet online. However, groups that desire to meet in person will be allowed to do so, as long as they follow General Guidelines.

### Music

Because of the studies showing the great risk of virus transmission through singing and wind instruments, we will implement the following guidelines for use of music in worship through the Green Phase. While we are creating videos for worship, the following practices will be allowed in the building...

- Instrumentalists may practice/play in sanctuary, as long as 6-foot social distancing can be safely observed and General Guidelines followed while in the building
- Wind Instruments: Soloists, small ensembles (4 or fewer people) may practice/play in the sanctuary with a distance of approximately 20 feet maintained between people and General Guidelines are followed while in the building
- Singing: Soloists, small ensembles (4 or fewer people) may practice/play in the sanctuary with a distance of approximately 20 feet maintained between people and General Guidelines are followed while in the building

### Outside Groups

With outside groups, we have little control over the adherence to the General Guidelines and communication about how spaces were used in order for proper cleaning to be done. We also recognize that there will be needed learning as we implement reopening procedures. So, outside groups will not be permitted in the beginning of moving to the green phase (at least until September 1). This will be reevaluated after the county has been in the green phase for four weeks.

### Rooms available for group gatherings

It is necessary that the rooms made available for group gatherings be large enough for people to gather while still being spread 6 feet apart, and well-ventilated enough to allow for the flow of fresh air.

Sanctuary  
Churchill Hall  
Streeter Lounge  
Youth Room  
Music Room  
Downstairs Classrooms  
Chapel

### Staff

During the Green Phase, may continue to work remotely as guided by conversation with supervisor. When staff do come to the building to work, we will ask that all General Guidelines be followed. Staff will continue to alert our Facilities Manager of their building use each day so that all utilized areas will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized at the end of each work day.

### Pastoral Care

Inability to enter hospitals, nursing homes, and similar facilities has made direct care for people during crisis times difficult. Pastoral care will continue via telephone and other electronic devices until these institutions deem direct pastoral presence possible and safe. The pastors will continue to communicate with local healthcare facilities to determine safety status.

The pastors may perform weddings, funerals, and/or other special functions of worship inside the church building at the pastors' discretion as long as the General Guidelines are followed.

### Communication

The church will continue to use all forms of digital communication to update the congregation on current and changes to these practices. It is recognized that changes can happen rapidly, and every effort will be made to communicate updates as quickly as possible. Periodic mailed communication will also occur as changes merit and as staff fulfillment makes possible.

In the event that a participant in a gathered event subsequently learns that he/she tests positive for COVID-19, the individual is strongly encouraged to contact the church so that those with whom the individual came into contact at the church may be notified. If church staff learn of the infection status of an individual who has participated in recent in-person activities, the church will notify those who may have been present with the individual, whether or not it is possible to ensure that the infected person is aware of this knowledge.