

Plan for Continuing In-person Worship and Activities **Published January 2023**

Purpose of this Document

To provide clarity on continuing efforts for church worship services and activities.

This document provides guidance for the following:

- Directions to Congregation/Need for Grace
- Regulations & Precautions for In-Person Worship
- Decision-making scenarios for church activities

Flexibility

As community health status is constantly changing, as are the guidelines from national, state, and local officials, we want to emphasize the need for flexibility and adaptability as a key element of the following plan.

With that flexibility in mind, this plan requires us to be prudent and wise on an individual level too. If you determine that you and/or your family should refrain from in-person attendance for a time, the Session supports your use of wisdom. We would encourage you to continue to participate in worship through the online resources that are provided.

Directions to Congregation

1. **If you or any member of your household has symptoms of sickness of any kind, you are strongly encouraged to stay home and participate online.** If you test positive for an infectious disease, please share that information with church members who may have been exposed.
2. **Protect high-risk individuals, as they are still at risk of severe complications from COVID and other viruses.** There are members of our church community that are immunocompromised or at high risk for complications from illnesses. This may mean taking precautions that you may not ordinarily be required to take, but *should* take to protect the community.
3. **Continue to exercise caution and maintain hygiene protocols.** Vaccines are not 100% effective against infections, and the lasting immunity time is unknown. Vaccines produce an

antibody immune response within the person which usually prevents severe sickness, but does not guarantee that a vaccinated person will not become sick.

Grace is necessary for the unity of the body of Christ at Potomac Hills. There is a strong temptation to division within the church on the topic of health as there will inevitably be differences of opinion as to what is wise and what is not.

a. **Those that are less cautious will need to bear with those that are more cautious.**

It will seem that those with a different opinion are living in fear. The gracious and gentle response ought to be one to bear with our seemingly weaker brother with compassion, charity, grace, humility, and patience.

b. **Those that are more cautious will have a different temptation.** The temptation

will be to view those that are less cautious as reckless, threatening, and uncaring.

Here, grace requires us to remember that these are our brothers and sisters in Christ whom we love. Grace requires us to bear with them with compassion, charity, grace, humility, and patience. It also means that we may not sever fellowship with them, but should in grace move toward them in love.

Regulations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/>), the Virginia State Department of Health (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/>), and the Loudoun County Department of Health (<https://www.loudoun.gov/health>) are the best sources for information on the prevention of disease and guidelines on what do to if you become sick.

Potomac Hills will follow any required public health guidelines from federal, state, or county health departments. Additionally, any public health requirements imposed by Loudoun County Public Schools such as masks, distancing, etc. will be adhered to for worship services.

Precautions

The following precautions are in place at Harper Park Middle School by Potomac Hills:

- Offering boxes are placed by the exits.
- Bulletin and announcement information are published to the church website in advance, and projected during the service, instead of passed out.
- Hand sanitizer is available throughout the auditorium.
- The worship service is livestreamed.

All cleaning is handled by LCPS personnel.

Decision Making Scenarios

When a church attender contracts COVID or another infectious disease, the following decision-making scenarios are listed to help with determining whether or not to cancel church activities.

1. Infected person was at church on Sunday

Encourage the person to notify all close contacts at church. Encourage those with close contact to get tested as needed. Close contact is defined as less than 6 feet proximity, with or without masks, for more than 15 minutes. If the infected adult or child was in nursery or other program where significant close contact occurs, then that program *may* be cancelled for the following Sunday, regardless of whether any participants show symptoms. Other church activities will continue as planned.

2. Family member of infected person was at church on Sunday

If there is a known infectious case within someone's household, that household should refrain from attending worship in person, and should attend online until any applicable state and/or federal guidelines for recovery pass. Encourage the person to notify all close contacts at church. Church activities will continue as planned.

3. Many different families are sick in the same week

Encourage the infected families to follow the notification, testing, and isolation/quarantine processes listed in 1. and 2. above. Based on the following information, the Session will decide whether in-person church activities will be cancelled for the week, and online worship and activities held: whether the families were at church the previous Sunday, the amount of interaction the positive individuals have had with other church families, the overall community positivity numbers in Loudoun County, and any other pertinent information.

4. If a member of the church had close contact exposure with an infected person

Encourage those with close contact to get tested. They are free to return to in-person worship after the appropriate isolation and/or quarantine times have elapsed.

5. Both Pastors are infected and/or are in quarantine

- a. Option 1: Guest preacher preaches
- b. Option 2: Ruling Elder preaches
- c. Option 3: Preacher pre-records sermon to be played at in-person worship
- d. Option 4: Previously recorded sermon played at in-person worship

6. Both Pastors are infected and/or are in quarantine and worship will be online only

- a. Option 1: Preacher pre-records sermon to go with pre-recorded music
- b. Option 2: Already posted sermon is used with already posted music for that Sunday

7. Both Music Directors are infected and/or are in quarantine

- a. Option 1: Have another PHPC musician or someone else that is capable lead worship
- b. Option 2: Pre-record music and have a PHPC vocalist lead worship
- c. Option 3: Play previously recorded videos