

Policy for Returning to In Person-Worship

Approved by: The Session, April 21, 2021

Purpose | The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of guidelines to advise the staff and session of the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville in offering a form of in-person worship which is faithful to our tradition and calling as a church, meaningful to those who participate, and provides for the safety of all those involved, including the surrounding community.

Target Start Date | Sunday, May 16, 2021

Policy | Following state guidelines for indoor gatherings, this initial phase of indoor worship will allow for a **maximum of 25 people** in the meetinghouse.¹ This includes pastors, worship leaders, and the tech team (usually 5-6 people). In this initial phase of gathering for in-person worship, priority will be given to those members of the congregation who have unreliable or no access to our livestream. In addition to in-person indoor worship, we will plan for in-person outdoor worship roughly once a month, at the discretion of the staff and weather permitting, during this initial phase that would allow for a **maximum of 75 people**.

Requirements | The following represent the minimum requirements for in-person worship during this initial phase:

1. Registration for all in-person worship services will be required for the purpose of contact tracing should someone test positive for COVID 19.
2. Anyone who plans to attend worship in person will be required to practice self screening according to the guidelines outlined in Appendix A.
3. Children under the age of 13 will not be allowed to participate in indoor worship in this initial phase because of the difficulty for younger children to maintain physical distancing. Children of all ages are invited to participate in outdoor worship at the discretion of their parents.
4. All participants in in-person worship above the age of 2 will be required to wear a mask.
5. All participants in in-person worship will be required to maintain a minimum of 6 feet physical distancing from those not in their family or pod.
6. All participants in indoor worship will be required to use hand sanitizer prior to entering the meetinghouse.

Protocols | The following represent the minimum safety protocols for in-person worship during this initial phase:

¹ We acknowledge that we, as a religious organization in NJ, have been given special dispensation to host indoor religious gatherings (i.e. worship services, funerals, weddings, etc.) at 50% building capacity provided we are able to maintain physical distancing and other standard precautions. However, it is the discretion of the RIPA team to follow the more conservative state guidelines for general indoor gatherings as they better represent the current statistics surrounding COVID 19 activity and safe practice.

1. Weather permitting, all windows in the meetinghouse will be opened to increase air circulation and ventilation.
2. Participation in responsive liturgy will be allowed, quietly and while masks are worn.
3. Singing in outdoor worship will be allowed, quietly and while masks are worn. Singing in indoor worship will not be permitted.
4. The peace of Christ shall be shared while maintaining physical distancing and remaining in your pew for indoor worship.
5. Worship leaders (musicians in particular) should wear a mask at all times. Pastors and liturgists who are fully vaccinated may remove their masks, at their discretion, while at the pulpit. Masks should be worn at all other times.
6. Restroom facilities will be open to those who need them. It is asked that those who use the facilities wipe down any surface they use with disinfectant wipes and wash their hands.
7. On Communion Sundays, participants in worship should bring their own elements. Masks may be removed momentarily, only when partaking in the elements and should immediately be replaced.
8. Baptisms will be observed during outdoor worship gatherings or indoors at a later time when it is determined that it is safe for younger children to participate in indoor worship.

Next Steps | The Returning to In Person Activities Advisory Group is committed to monitoring changes in state guidelines, changes in COVID 19 activity and statistics, and the vaccination status of our community. If the state guidelines change to allow fewer or more persons in indoor gatherings, our guidelines will change to match that number. Should we discover a higher percentage of our membership is fully vaccinated and determine that we can safely accommodate more persons than the general guidelines allow, while maintaining other minimum safety protocols and guidelines for religious organizations in NJ, we will propose as much at that time.

Appendix A | PCOL's COVID 19 Self Screen for Gathering Guidelines

Screening

If you or any household members have pending Covid-19 tests (due to symptoms, not for pre-procedural purposes), please exclude yourself from in-person activities. Please screen yourself prior to attending any in-person activity and if you have had any of the following symptoms in the last 72 hours, please exclude yourself and household members from in person participation:

- Fever (temperature of 99.5+)
- Chills/sweating
- Body aches
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Loss of taste or loss of smell

Travel

We ask that anyone who has not been fully vaccinated and has been on an airplane in the last 14 days, from any destination, please refrain from in-person worship.

Vaccination Status

PCOL strongly encourages any unvaccinated individuals² to exclude themselves from in-person activities because of the increased risk of exposure and transmission.

² "Unvaccinated individuals" is understood to mean anyone who is not two weeks post their final vaccination.