

Elm Presbyterian Church guidelines for reopening the building (draft)

A holy place set aside for worship. A place of refuge or protection. There's a reason we worship in a sanctuary—it's where we trust that God is present in a way like no other. We know we are safe to worship however we choose. And we trust each other to offer support and companionship on the journey of faith.

So it's no small thing that for more than two months, our church building has been closed to all but essential staff and volunteers. Our church—the people—has never been “shut down.” We continue to be God's people in this place. And God has been present in other sanctuaries—our homes—because God is present everywhere, all the time. Yet we're longing for our chance to share in worship and other activities, to see our companions face to face, share a cup of coffee and a hug.

During this time, Session has continued to oversee the life of our congregation, praying for and checking in with everyone we can, assuring that our paid staff is being taken care of and that our worship continues. By cancelling in-person worship, all activities and the use of the building by guest groups, we have followed the emergency orders and advice issued by our state government and health experts. Our primary concern has been, is, and will be for everyone's health, safety and well-being—and we thank you for your continued support of these decisions.

We also have been discussing and planning how we will go forward once the stay home order is lifted. In our quest for information, we have consulted guidelines from the Presbyterian Church (USA), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and Church Mutual, our insurance company, since there are insurance liability issues with reopening our building for use.

With all that in mind, we have decided to proceed with caution. Our target date, subject to change, is Sunday, July 12, and between now and then, we plan to begin office hours and resume some other activities. Following are the guidelines which we ask everyone to follow to keep all of us as safe as possible.

- Please monitor your own health. If you aren't feeling well, please stay home! It would be helpful if you would take your own temperature before coming to church for any reason and stay home if it's above normal.
- Please sanitize your hands often—bring your own sanitizer and we also plan to have sanitizer available throughout the building. Please use it and wash your hands often.
- Please maintain physical distancing. Current recommendation is 6 feet from people not in your household.
- Please wear a mask for worship and other activities—if you don't have one we'll provide one for you. Children under 10 are exempt from this. If you aren't able to wear a mask for some reason, please stay home for now. (Masks are important for when physical distancing can't be maintained or for long periods of exposure to groups of people.)

Those are general items for whenever you come to the church building. In addition, these are the specifics going forward for our groups, activities, and worship:

Building access

- All entrance and exit of the building will be through the main (East) door of the church.

Restrooms

- Restrooms will be limited to use by one person at a time (unless a helper is needed). Wipes will be available to wipe down toilets, handles, sinks, etc., before/after use.

Groups (in-house & guests)

In addition to general items:

- Use of the building, except for worship, will resume the week of June 15, assuming the Michigan stay home order has been lifted.
- All groups are asked to abide by the size limits required by the state, which may expand during the summer. This applies to anyone using the building for any function, e.g. Circle meetings, TOPS, exercise, funerals, private gatherings, etc.
- To facilitate sanitizing, all guest groups will be limited to using our Round Room for their activities.
- Our Kitchen, Dining Room, and Living Room will not be available for use at this time.

Community Closet

In addition to general items:

- Use of our Community Closet will be by appointment only, with guests asked not to bring children with them

Office

- Office hours will be 8 a.m.-12 Noon, Monday through Wednesday, if the way be clear, beginning June 15, until further notice.
- For now, we ask that you not come into our offices unless you're wearing a mask.

Worship

In addition to general items:

- In person worship will begin on Sunday, July 12, if the way be clear
- Worship will be at 10:30 a.m., no Coffee Hour or gathering in the narthex for more than limited conversation.
- Please enter the building through the main (east) entrance only, mindful of 6 feet physical distancing and go directly to be seated in the sanctuary. If many people are entering the church at the same time, please wait in your car for space to open up.
- Doors will be kept open; please refrain from touching them.

- Pews will be marked for physical distancing. People living in the same household will be able to sit together.
- Air conditioning will be on before the service only; floor fans will not be used, so please dress accordingly
- Nursery care will not be offered
- Drinking fountain will be turned off; please bring your own water bottle.
- Service will be shortened to approximately 40 minutes for less time spent together in the sanctuary.
- Paper orders of service will be available at every seat.
- Music will be included in the service, but we will not be singing together as a congregation (per CDC and experts, because of the deep breathing required for singing, droplets are known to spread farther than 6 feet and possibly up to 25 feet) .
- Communion will not be shared for now.
- Offering will be received before and after the service in designated locations
- Ushers will dismiss people by rows. Please exit the building as soon as possible, maintaining physical distance
- We plan to continue our recorded service and are considering livestreaming our service at some point.

We hope these items will help us reduce the risk for everyone and allow us to move forward. All of this is subject to change as our situation unfolds over the summer. If you have questions or concerns, please contact any Session member.