



## Strategies for Re-opening Church

### Outer Banks Presbyterian Church

**(Approved by Session on June 17, 2020)**

#### **Basic Assumptions, Information, and Recommendations**

The Session of Outer Banks Presbyterian Church has approved closing the church facility to meetings of church and tenant groups, allowing staff to work from home, electronic communications with members and friends of the church, and live-streaming and recording Sunday Worship Services, including permission for providing the Sacrament of Holy Communion virtually. This Session directive is open-ended and is effective until further notice.

Governor Cooper's last executive order regarding religious gatherings for worship allowed for worship services to be conducted inside church buildings if 10 people or less are present, or unlimited gatherings for worship or wedding services held outside. The Governor's office clarified if it is not possible for a place of worship to hold their services outside or through other accommodations such as online, the 10-person limit does not apply and places of worship can hold services inside with more than 10 people if they take steps to minimize exposure to the coronavirus. Since Outer Banks Presbyterian Church has the ability to provide online live-streaming of its services, this stipulation does not apply. Later, a Federal Court Judge reversed Governor Cooper's Phase I opening directives for churches. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which had published very specific guidelines for churches, and recommended social distancing of at least six feet for individuals, while persons living in the same household could sit together, provided they are six feet from the next individual or family unit, as well as the wearing of facial masks at worship services, had dropped any mention of places of worship from their publicly available documents. On May 25, 2020, the CDC reinstated some guidelines and re-established "recommendations" for social distancing and wearing masks. Although the CDC has lessened its published guidelines for church gatherings, Dare County and the State of North Carolina have embraced the CDC's initial recommendations. Governor Cooper announced Phase II reopening standards, but due to the Federal Judge's reversal of his church reopening standards in Phase I, the Governor chose not to appeal the Federal ruling and did not include specific guidance for churches in his Phase II standards, which are effective through June 26, 2020. The Governor verbally encouraged churches, if opening, to allow a maximum of 10 people inside and maximum of 25 people at outside gatherings, and the wearing of facial masks. The church's Covid-19 Task Force has also consulted directives for reopening from the Presbyterian Church USA and New Hope's Executive Presbyter.

Considering all of the directives above the Task Force has developed strategies for reopening the church for Worship Services at such future time as the Session determines that it is safe to reopen the Church and gives at least ten days of advance notice. The Session will consider the latest information based on science and data from the State of North Carolina, the CDC, and Dare County. The Task Force believes that some Congregants will be hesitant to return for worship if strict standards are not adopted and honored due to the vulnerability (age and underlying medical conditions) of most church members to the Covid-19 virus. The task force encourages all members who do attend in-person worship services to be aware of other people's personal desires regarding Covid-19 and beliefs about the virus. The Task Force believes many members have taken personal steps to protect themselves, have followed all the rules and recommendations, and may not want to return to church until there is a vaccination against the virus, making it essential that the church continues to live stream and record services. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the following action items to the Session for adoption for reopening the church for worship services until further action is taken by the Session. When the Session approved the recommendations below, the Session prayed for patience and respect for all viewpoints about the best approaches to the coronavirus pandemic. The Session believes we could all use a bit more humility, and the church should lead the way. "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3)

### **Adopted Actions for Reopening the Church when Session Approves**

1. There will be two (2) worship services of a maximum of 50 people total at each service on Sunday mornings, one beginning at 9:00 a.m. and the second beginning at 11:00 a.m. Sunday School classes of 10 people or less could be held at 10:00 a.m., provided social distancing and wearing face coverings/masks are practiced, and Sunday School may be live-streamed and recorded for those who feel uncomfortable attending in person at this time. The 11:00 a.m. service will be live-streamed and recorded. Children's Church will be held during the 9:00 am Worship Service, provided that no more than 10 children attend. The Children's Church will be held outside, weather permitting. A canopy will be purchased for these outside meetings and for other church functions, as appropriate. The Nursery will be opened for the 9:00 am service only, provided at least two persons are staffing the Nursery at all times. Children's Church and Nursery will be publicized on the church website, electronic newsletters, and printed newsletters.
2. No more than 50 people total will be allowed inside the church for worship at either the 9:00 a.m. or the 11:00 a.m. services. Forty-five of these seating places will be allocated to the Pastor, Music performers, and camera technicians, as well as to members of the church. Five of these seating spaces will be allocated to visitors or "walk-ins." The Session has asked the Covid-19 Task Force to evaluate the use of the Fellowship Hall for overflow attendance, if needed. Persons wanting to worship at the church must sign up online or contact his/her Elder-Care Session Member to reserve a seat. The church will

send an automatic reply to confirm attendance. The electronic sign-up form, recommended by Hollie Writtenberry, was approved by Session, provided the form also allow persons to indicate whether or not they would have children to stay in the nursery and how many.

3. Two ushers, one at the front door and one at the south door, would greet people and make sure they remain at least six feet apart as they enter the Gathering Space. The ushers would also social distance themselves.
4. A table will be placed in the Gathering Space near the double doors to the Sanctuary. Bulletins, collection plates, and disposable facial masks will be placed on this table. An usher will retrieve the contents of the collection plates at the beginning and ending of each worship service and place in a secure location in the church office for a church receiving treasurer.
5. Wearing facial masks is highly recommended when a person enters the church and during the entire time a person is inside the Sanctuary and/or other church spaces. The church will provide disposable masks for those arriving without a mask.
6. Four Elders will serve at the two worship services, two Elders serving at the 9:00 a.m. service and two Elders serving at the 11:00 a.m. service. The Elders will greet worshipers as they enter the Gathering Space and assist them in finding social distanced seats in the Sanctuary. The Elders will open the two designated doors at 8:15 a.m. and close the church after the 11:00 a.m. church. A fifth Elder will be assigned to serve as alternate, if needed, while this style of worship lasts. Following a worship service, the Elders in charge will assist in emptying the Sanctuary by leading the back rows out first, and proceeding to the front rows, keeping those exiting at least six feet apart until they are out of the church. Persons should not congregate in the Gathering Space, Fellowship Hall, hallways, or Sunday School rooms in the church, and should exit the church promptly. Persons are urged not to congregate in the parking lot unless they remain at least six feet apart. Direct touching, hugging, or other body contact is strongly discouraged. The Pastor and the Clerk of Session will develop tentative, temporary Elder assignments for the affected Worship Services. Elders will not serve as ushers during this time.
7. The Sanctuary will be organized to accomplish social distancing of six feet apart. There will be appropriate seating for individuals and persons living in the same household. Rows of seats will be color coded, one color for the 9:00 a.m. service and another color for the 11:00 a.m. worship service, in order to avoid any person sitting in a previously occupied seat. Nonie Booth will supervise this configuration of the Sanctuary to accomplish social distancing.

8. Rev. Dr. Jody Moore will enter the Sanctuary wearing a facial mask. He would remove his mask when he speaks during the Worship Service. Should persons wish to consult with Dr. Moore, they would remain in their seats following the Worship Service, and he would come to them, practicing social distancing. The 11:00 a.m. service will be live streamed and recorded.
9. Music during worship services would be instrumental, with one or two musicians and with one or two soloists or accompanists at the maximum, provided musicians and soloist or accompanists social distance and consider wearing face masks when not performing or singing. A liturgist may be incorporated in the worship service. Musicians and soloists will transition to perform only when the choir anthem would usually be performed during in-person worship and for a musical interlude (musical meditation). Since there will not be Choir or Congregational singing when the church re-opens, some of the Congregational singing responses now being live streamed will be phased out to match the format that will be used when the church re-opens. Since there will be no Choir or Congregational singing, the Order of Worship will transition to the following format:  
The Prelude  
The Welcome and Announcements  
The Opening Prayer (by a Liturgist)  
The Hymn of Praise (to be phased out after three more Sundays)  
The Silent Prayer of Confession  
The Assurance of God's Forgiveness  
The Gloria (to be phased out immediately)  
The First Scripture Lesson (by the Liturgist)  
Special Music (can be the soloist(s))  
The Second Scripture Lesson  
The Sermon  
The Meditation (now to be called Musical Interlude and can include other musicians)  
The Pastoral Prayer & the Lord's Prayer  
The Hymn of Sending (to be phased out after three more Sundays)  
The Charge & Benediction  
The Closing Response (to be phased out immediately)  
The Postlude
10. "Friendship pads" will be removed from the Sanctuary. "Passing of the Peace" will be done in-place by touching one's heart and smiling. Dr. Moore will demonstrate this practice, so all will know how it is done. Direct touching, hugging, or other body contact is strongly discouraged as a courtesy to and in honor of all persons in the Sanctuary.
11. Holy Communion would be done virtually until further notice. The Session will consider at a later date when to have in person communion. The new process for in-person Communion would be one set of Elders plus the Pastor and one Elder (total of four) stationed at the front of the Sanctuary. The Elder of the Month would assist in directing

persons to the front to receive Communion. Those taking Communion would walk to the front of the Sanctuary to receive the Sacrament, practicing social distancing. They would immediately return to their seats via the side aisles after taking the Elements. The Worship Committee will purchase five stackable communion trays and five bread plates, made of silver tone, polished aluminum and those items would be used hereafter, in a manner determined by the Session. The cost is \$303.01. Session authorized the funds to come from the undesignated Memorial Fund. (An individual's generous donation paid for these new communion trays and plates)

12. There will be no coffee hours or food served during this time following the Worship Services or at other times by church groups using the church. Tenant groups would not be allowed use of the church until the Session makes a determination that they would be allowed to return, which could be when the State of North Carolina enters Phase 3 initiatives. AA, when returning, would be allowed to prepare and serve coffee only, provided they clean and sanitize with sanitizing wipes or sprays any areas they have used.
13. Bible studies of 10 or fewer people will be allowed in the church building when the Governor places North Carolina into Phase 3 reopening, provided social distancing and wearing facial masks are practiced.
14. The church library will be closed during Worship Services and no library books will be displayed outside the library until the Session allows.
15. The Patriotic Concert for 2020 is cancelled.
16. Children's Church will be held during the 9:00 am Worship Service, provided that no more than 10 children attend. The children's Church will be held outside, weather permitting. A canopy shall be purchased at a cost of \$149.99 for these outside meetings and for other church functions, as appropriate. Session authorized funds for the canopy to come from the undesignated Memorial Fund. The Nursery will be opened for the 9:00 am service only. These plans shall be publicized on the church website and electronic newsletters. The Nursery will be thoroughly sanitized after each use.
17. Church tenant groups, such as AA, OBX Stamp Club, CoDA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, will be allowed to return when the Governor places North Carolina into Phase 3 re-opening strategies, provided each group honors maximum assembly requirements the Centers for Disease Control, the State of North Carolina and Governor Cooper's Phase 3 initiatives, Dare County, and/or their respective parent organizations establishes. The Session has now allowed the Scouts to meet outside on the church grounds provided they adhere to the Governor's recommendations on limits of numbers of people gathering. The church encourages social distancing, wearing facial masks, and requires wiping down all surfaces used and touched with disinfectant wipes or sprays before leaving the building. Since initially no activities will be allowed at the church on Saturdays to ensure

that the church is properly sanitized and cleaned for Sunday worship services, AA will be offered the opportunity when Phase 3 begins to schedule an additional evening meeting on Mondays through Thursdays that does not conflict with other church events or activities.

18. The church sexton will clean and sanitize the church on Mondays and Fridays each week once in-person worship begins.
19. Vacation Bible School for 2020 will be known as Staycation Bible School using a curriculum developed by the Presbyterian Church USA. Staycation Bible School is a five-day curriculum that will be held virtually during the entire Month of July, and coordinated and conducted by the Director of Youth and Young Families Ministries and the Christian Education Committee. The Youth Group will be permitted to travel to Montreat, NC for a “back home retreat” the week of July 18-25, 2020, provided the state of North Carolina has moved into Phase 3 by that time. The youth will participate in an on-line curriculum provided by Massanetta Springs and Montreat. Parents will sign a liability waiver giving permission for their youth to participate.
20. The Session may make changes as circumstances warrant or that the Session deems necessary and appropriate, based on observed behaviors and experiences and more data and information that will become available. These guidelines for reopening the church will be publicized on the church website, in the church newsletter, the mid-week E-news of announcements and devotionals, and in the local news media. Elders will contact persons on their Elder-care lists who may not have access to the Internet. Moderators will be asked to let their committee members know about the guidelines.

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Rev. Dr. Joseph G. Moore, Jr.  
Moderator of Session

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Gary McGee  
Clerk of Session