

## COVID Protocols for Returning to Onsite Worship as of October 17, 2021

### Overall Guidance:

- In general, the church will follow the guidance issued by the DC government, revising these procedures as that changes, and as we see how things work at New York Avenue. [https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/page\\_content/attachments/Best\\_Practices\\_Operations\\_DCHealth\\_COVID-19\\_Guidance\\_2021.5.28.pdf](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/page_content/attachments/Best_Practices_Operations_DCHealth_COVID-19_Guidance_2021.5.28.pdf)
- We recognize that each person has a different comfort level with regard to COVID-19 and contact with others. We want to provide a safe space for as many people as possible, and ask that we all respect each others' preferences to shake hands (or not) or touch elbows (or just wave or nod), hug or stay apart.
- Vaccination is required for all church staff, including nursery workers.
  - We are working toward a process for verifying that Sunday school teachers, anyone working with children, and anyone who will be removing his/her/their mask to lead worship are vaccinated.
- Masks are to be worn over one's nose and mouth at all times in the building. Masks will be available at the doors for those who have forgotten to bring one.
- When someone is speaking in front of the congregation (e.g., at the lectern, pulpit or communion table) and is six feet from others, they *may* choose to remove their mask, per DC guidance. We will respect anyone's choice to wear a mask regardless. [https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/page\\_content/attachments/Masks\\_Guidance\\_DCHealth\\_COVID-19\\_Guidance\\_2021-9-22.pdf](https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/page_content/attachments/Masks_Guidance_DCHealth_COVID-19_Guidance_2021-9-22.pdf)
- Air filtration in the sanctuary: the air is run through a MERV 13 filter and is recirculated 6x per hour. (per Karl Hoffman, 10/7/21)
- The congregation will be reminded in the Weekly and on the website that if they are not feeling well in any way that they should not attend.

### Arrivals and Departures:

- Elevators - It's recommended to limit the number of people in them to 2 people or one household; signage to that effect will be at the elevators.
- The congregation will be invited to leave through the various exits and socialize outside if possible. The pastors are happy to see everyone but prefer not to shake hands. They will go to separate spots in the sanctuary to avoid crowding among those who wish to greet them.

### During Worship:

- Every other pew will be kept vacant to allow for physical distancing.
  - If the numbers are such that this causes crowding on the remaining pews, ushers will assist people to strategically seat themselves on the intervening pews so they are not directly behind or in front of people on the next pew.

- Attendees will be encouraged to maintain 6 feet distance between household groups/social bubbles, through signage on the entrances and in the bulletin.
- During the Passing of the Peace, the congregation will be asked to use commonly used peace signs and waves.
- Onsite attendees may sing hymns quietly behind their masks.
- The choir will sing its anthem(s) at the front, but they and soloists will be masked.
- Time with children: Children will be invited to come forward and sit in the first pew and the leader will remain masked on the steps. All over 2 years old will wear masks and return to seats until worship play is possible.
- The offering will be taken at the exits.
- Neither food nor drink will be served at congregational non-worship events inside the building, including at receptions, coffee hours, meetings, or other informal gatherings. The Session will reconsider this decision when DC lifts the indoor mask mandate.

**If a person in attendance at worship tests positive for COVID-19**, they are encouraged to call the church office (202-393-3700), and their privacy will be respected.

[Full contact tracing procedures may be viewed in this document.](#)

Approved by the Session Oct. 17, 2021