

Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church (FHPC)

Guidelines and Considerations for Returning to Worship

Initial Perspectives:

1. We accept state and federal guidelines for what they are: a general reference point about things to be done or avoided. As such, while these guidelines should be consulted as a framework for constructive discussion and decision-making, responsibility for leadership at FHPC resides with its Session and Pastor.
2. The health and well-being of our congregation is primary; therefore, CDC as well as local health advisories will be followed.
3. This means we will: 1) be cautious, 2) start small; 3) return to activities in gradual, progressive steps; 4) continually evaluate published health advisories and monitor conditions within our church family, and 5) maintain vigilance.
4. We believe that we are **each** personally responsible for the care and protection of **all** of us. Mutual regard and common sense is hereby affirmed to be core to our common practices. These include at a minimum, frequent and regular hand washing, wearing masks whenever appropriate to activity and setting, as well as maintaining recommended physical distancing from one another.

Beginning Precepts:

1. First and foremost: It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that our return to worship is ***strictly voluntary***. Our service will continue to be offered online, even as we conduct onsite worship in compliance with Federal CDC guidelines.
2. If you are exhibiting any symptoms, please refrain from participating and seek medical attention immediately.
3. The best guidelines for attendance are those articulated by Rod Waremburg of Desert Creek Fellowship in a recent email: "I am not looking for heroes here! If the doc has told you to stay home... stay home! If you are in a higher risk group... stay home! There won't be anything for the kids so if you have kids... stay home! If you are just a tiny bit uneasy about meeting this soon... stay home!"
4. That said, and remembering that participation in worship at FHPC is voluntary and at the sole discretion of the individual, let us hereby covenant to be encouraging and respectful of those having disparate attitudes toward the prudence of gathering for worship. The decision has little or nothing to do with faithfulness and much to do with individual approaches to personal safety.

Practical Implementation:

1. There will be one worship service only at 9am. Worshipers may attend on campus or participate via electronic outlets (Facebook, FHPC Website).
2. FHPC will provide an electronic bulletin that will be sent prior to service asking family members to follow the protocols outlined in this document. No printed materials (eg. Bulletins) will be available at the Sanctuary.
3. There will be charts/signs with safe distancing and participation directions outside and inside the primary entrance.
4. Ushers will wear masks. At least initially, we will dispense with the service of Greeters.
5. Based on CDC guidelines, a safe capacity for FHPC is approximately 80 people. This calculation takes into account our available space and fixtures and factors in recognized public standards regarding “safe” distance. These standards suggest allowing 6’ between seated worshiping units with occupancy limited to every-other fixed pew. This assumes couples/families will be together with appropriate personal space.

Should attendance exceed this safe capacity, pre-sanitized overflow space will be made available in our Fellowship Center and the worship service will be presented via Facebook or Website on the available screens.

6. Floor markers reflecting current social distancing standards will be placed in the Narthex and doors can be propped open to avoid contact with surfaces.
7. All materials (cards, writing implements, Bibles, Hymnals) will be expunged from the pews and placed in storage until such time as they may be safely returned to their customary locations.
8. The church building will be disinfected in advance of arrivals on May 17th with a special focus on both high traffic areas and prominent contact points including, but not limited to, doorknobs, countertops, pew backs, etc.
9. Participants will be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer in the restroom or at available stations.

Worshipers are encouraged to bring their own masks if they so desire. However, wearing of masks in worship will not be required. Unfortunately, FHPC finds it impossible to furnish additional masks at this time due to lack of availability.

10. All offerings will be handled online or can be dropped in the offering box in the Narthex. (A sanitation station will be maintained in close proximity.)
11. Ushers and/or church Staff will assist in moving members of the congregation in and out of the worship hall according to proper social distancing considerations, as necessary.

At the conclusion of worship, an orderly dismissal will be orchestrated, beginning with back rows first.

12. All involved in conducting worship will be properly distanced from one another whenever practicable.
13. When applicable, the Lord's supper will be individually wrapped and placed on trays using gloves and parishioners will each take their own portion.
14. There will be no congregating in the Narthex.
15. There will be no organized Fellowship Time and coffee and snacks will be discontinued until such time as these activities seem feasible.
16. Sunday school may or may not be conducted consistent with the above guidelines. At this time, any materials handling will be avoided or done with gloves.
17. Unless the overall situation in our community changes markedly in the foreseeable future, on-site VBS will be cancelled for this summer although our CF Council is encouraged to consider ways to stay in touch and support those families who have been identified as participating in the past.

For the time being, worship is the only form of gathering under consideration for our FHPC family. All other church activities will remain on hiatus and the office will continue to be staffed under locked conditions until such time as discretion permits. Session will continue to monitor the overall situation and will advise of changes in this policy when it seems prudent.

Please keep in mind these Guidelines contain recommendations that are subject to change as situations & conditions develop.