

Protocol for the Re-opening of Friendship

Given the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the proliferation of the Covid-19 Virus, we have been compelled to make serious adjustments in the way we understand and live out our life together as a church. We have found a new “normal” by worshiping together online, yet we long to be together again. We plan to resume limited in-person worship on August 30th, knowing that we will face yet another new normal as we seek to protect the health and safety of our church family. Many changes must take place in the ordinary routines of our Sunday morning gatherings. Utilizing the guidelines published by the State of Texas and the recommendations of the North Texas Conference, The Ministry Team and the Trustees are implementing these measures to allow us to gather again as a church family while also protecting one another.

1. Participants are asked to use sound judgment to create a sense of “social distancing.” Families may certainly sit together as they are comfortable, but we encourage persons to respect others by sitting at least six feet apart in all directions. If necessary, the balcony will be utilized to accommodate the number of persons attending the service.
2. All worship participants are required to wear face masks while inside the church building. Masks will be provided for those persons who do not bring their own, which they will then take home and wash before returning the next Sunday.
3. Members and friends are encouraged to limit personal contact with one another by not sharing hugs and handshakes. Other appropriate practices may be adopted. Any social interaction should take place outside the building proper and safe distances should be maintained.
4. Bulletins will be placed in the pews prior to the service and members will be expected to dispose of their bulletins personally.
5. Hand sanitizer will be available at all doors and members are expected to make good use of it, especially prior to touching items in the sanctuary.
6. Bibles and hymnals will be removed from the pews to limit physical contact. Words to the hymns will be printed in the bulletin and members are encouraged to bring their own Bibles.
7. Based on the results of current research into how the virus is spread, singing has been strongly discouraged in public gatherings. Therefore, the congregation is encouraged to not sing or participate in the spoken liturgy except in hushed tones.
8. We will not pass the offering plates through the congregation. Instead, the plates will be strategically located in the sanctuary and members will be invited to place their gifts in the plates as they arrive or when they leave. These offerings will be gathered at the end of the service, but not counted until mid-week, at a time when the financial volunteers can utilize safe practices in handling the money.
9. For communion, personal, disposable cups will be used. Appropriate bread will be administered by the pastor and/or lay leaders only after proper measures are taken to sanitize their hands.
10. The sanctuary will be cleaned and sanitized weekly, as will the bathrooms and all contact surfaces (doorknobs, light switches, etc.).
11. Until guidelines permit greater exposure, Sunday School will not meet.
12. All special services of the church, including but not limited to funerals and weddings, will follow the same guidelines in place for worship. No food will be served.
13. The church building will not be available for outside groups unless special and specific steps are taken to clean and sanitize the facilities after use.
14. For persons uncomfortable with gathering in the sanctuary and for the benefit of our home-bound and non-resident friends, Friendship will continue to offer the worship service through live-streaming on the public Facebook page.