



First Presbyterian Church

9 West Calhoun Street
Sumter, South Carolina 29150
(803) 773-3814

Pastor
Reverend Nick Cheek

October 15, 2020

Dear Church Family,

The Session, with a recommendation from the Reopening Task Force, has approved in-person worship to begin on November 1, 2020 at 10:30 am. Supplies are being purchased, officers are being trained, and modifications are being made as we prepare to gather. In order to safely welcome all and care for all, some important guidelines will need to be followed. I realize reading the word “guidelines” may cause you to think of a rigid rule following drudge, especially as we desperately long to be together. However, we are in a season of wilderness. This is a season, not of exuberance, but of breathing, quieting, of self-control and of trusting God when the way seems covered in a mist of uncertainty. In this season, I urge you as believers to remember our salvation history told throughout the Bible. It is a salvation history that points to a loving and steadfast God who walks with us in the midst of desert times. As we take this next step as a congregation, we will do so by prayerfully relying on God’s continued presence to guide us, shape us, and cover us with grace.

Below are guidelines established by the Reopening Task Force with approval from our Session.

Signs and Symptoms

- Assess yourself and your family before leaving home.
- If you are compromised or feeling ill, we ask that you please **STAY AT HOME**. If anyone has a fever, sore throat, cough, etc, **STAY AT HOME**.
- If you have been in close proximity with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 during the past 14 days, **STAY AT HOME**.
- If you have been tested for COVID-19 and have not yet received a negative test result, **STAY AT HOME**.
- If you are simply not comfortable being around others, **STAY AT HOME**. Live online worship will continue on our website, Facebook page and YouTube for those who would rather join us from the safety of home.

Before you arrive

- We will resume our normal service time at **10:30 am on November 1st**.
- You are asked to please RSVP for in-person worship by going to our website at www.fpcsumter.org before 3 pm the Friday before worship. If you do not have access to the internet, please call the church office to make a reservation.
- The maximum number allowed per service will be 150. If we reach capacity on a given Sunday, a decision will be made as to whether a second service is needed or if overflow into the Fellowship Hall will be sufficient. We will notify you if this occurs.

When you arrive

- The doors to the sanctuary will be open 20 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin. You will be required to enter through the front doors on Main Street. Please stay socially distanced as you enter the church. **ONLY those needing to use the elevator will be allowed to enter the breezeway doors**. The elevator will follow a one on, one off rule. If someone has an assistant, they or immediate family members will be allowed on at the same time. There will be ushers to assist you.

- Reserved seating is located at the front of the sanctuary for those using the elevator.
- Hand sanitizer will be available

To enter the sanctuary

- All adults, youth and children (kindergarten age and up) will be required to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth.
- Guests will be required to sit with their own family. Children must remain with parents. Ushers will be present to assist you with seating. All attendees will practice social distancing.
- Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that you will be sitting on a preferred row. As guests enter, we will fill up available rows starting from the front and working our way to the back.
- There will be no Sunday School, nursery, or children's worship. There will be a children's time included, but children will be required to remain in their seats.
- There will be no congregational singing.

As you leave the sanctuary

- Guests will be dismissed by rows with instructions on which exit to use. (One-way traffic only)
- Offering plates will not be passed. Baskets will be available as you exit the church, but we encourage you to continue giving online or by mail.
- Doors will remain open while everyone enters and exits. Doors will remain cracked throughout worship to increase the circulation of outside air.
- There will be no fellowship time or food offered.

General Information

- Hymnals and children's worship bags will be removed from the sanctuary.
- Bathrooms below the Sanctuary will be open for emergencies only. **Children must be accompanied by an adult family member.**
- The only building open for use Sunday morning will be the Sanctuary unless there is overflow.
- If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 within 14 days of attending a church service, please notify the church office at 803-773-3814.
- There will be appropriate signage to help you remember all the above.

If you have any pressing questions, please let us know. I am extremely grateful for the leadership of our Reopening Task Force and Session for prayerfully guiding us through this wilderness season. We are excited to begin Sanctuary in-person worship on November 1. Whether you join us in the Sanctuary or online, we will hold on to this promise from scripture – “when two or more are gathered, there the Lord is with them.”

Blessings,

Rev. Nick Cheek