

COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN

First Presbyterian Church

Dubuque, IA

Updated 5.15.2021

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COVID-19 Response Plan Explanation

The Session of First Presbyterian Church joins with the congregation in a longing for the sharing of in-person fellowship and public worship. Our church family is a gift from God which we treasure dearly, and we must treat it as such by proceeding into the resumption of worship with an abundance of caution. Walking a balance between population health and individual liberties is always a challenge.

Though in the beginning, we all held images in our minds of returning to church all at once in celebration, we now recognize that returning to in-person fellowship and public worship will need to happen in stages, and will likely not occur in a linear fashion, but one that adjusts depending on the status of COVID-19 in our area.

Therefore, the Session developed this “COVID-19 Response Plan” to guide us through the phases as a unified body of Christ. Our hope is that by outlining standards for gathering together, we will all be empowered to move forward, bringing glory to God, and caring for one another spiritually and physically.

Stage 1

Enter when the 14-day positivity rate of COVID-19 in Dubuque County is 15% or higher.

1. Church office - CLOSED

- Staff work primarily from home. If they must be in office:
 - Masks (covering mouth and nose) required to be worn at all times in the building, unless in an office with the door closed
 - Staff who use the office will be responsible for cleaning the spaces they utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes provided by the church before and after use

2. Church activities - GROUPS OF 10 OR FEWER

- Priority will be given to holding church activities online
- If necessary, a church activity may be held with fewer than 10 people with the understanding the following protocols will be strictly adhered to:
 - Masks (covering mouth and nose) required to be worn at all times
 - Social distancing of 6 feet or greater will be practiced
 - Food will not be served
 - Attendance will be taken to assist in the event contact tracing is necessary
 - Participants will be responsible for cleaning the spaces they utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes provided by the church before and after use
- Session will consider the following activities on a case by case basis: outdoor gatherings of more than 10 people, installations/ordinations, baptisms, funerals, weddings
- Those attending understand the inherent risk of their participation in activities

3. Corporate Worship - ONLINE ONLY

- Participation on-site at FPC limited to worship leaders (12 or fewer)
- Worship leaders will strategically position themselves to minimize the possibility of transmission
- Those participating on-site at FPC will:
 - Wear a mask (covering mouth and nose) at all times when not public-speaking or leading singing
 - Take their temperatures before coming to church. If their temperature is 100.4 degrees or higher, they will stay home
 - Stay home if they feel ill, have a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea; or if they have been asked to self-isolate due to exposure to a positive case of coronavirus

4. Other considerations

- The Personnel Committee will ensure increased cleaning protocols to reduce risk
- Church will provide in the office, basement, and sanctuary:
 - Disposable masks (for those who don't bring their own)
 - Latex-free gloves
 - Hand-sanitizer
 - Thermometer (office entrance ONLY)
 - Alcohol-based cleaning wipes for surfaces

Stage 2

Enter when the 14-day positivity rate of COVID-19 in Dubuque County is less than 15% for at least two consecutive weeks. (See website [https://www.cityofdubuque.org/2831/Local-COVID-19- Updates](https://www.cityofdubuque.org/2831/Local-COVID-19-Updates))

1. Church Office - OPEN

- Staff work primarily from the office. Work-from-home may be approved on a case by case basis in coordination with the Personnel Committee
 - Masks (covering mouth and nose) required to be worn at all times in the building, unless in an area alone, with the door closed
 - Social distancing of 6 feet or greater will be practiced
 - Staff will be responsible for cleaning the spaces they (or their visitors) utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes provided by the church before and after use

2. Church activities - GROUPS OF 15 OR FEWER

- Groups will make every effort to meet online, in the church basement or outdoors with the understanding the in-person following protocols will be strictly adhered to:
 - Masks (covering mouth and nose) required to be worn at all times
 - Social distancing of 6 feet or greater will be practiced
 - Food will not be served
 - Attendance will be taken to assist in the event contact tracing is necessary
 - Participants will be responsible for cleaning the spaces they utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes provided by the church before and after use
- Session will consider the following activities on a case by case basis: outdoor gatherings of more than 15 people, installations/ordinations, baptisms, funerals, weddings
- Those attending understand the inherent risk to their participation in activities

3. Corporate Worship - ONLINE ONLY, SAME AS STAGE 1

4. Other considerations - SAME AS STAGE 1

Stage 3

Enter if the 14-day positivity rate of COVID-19 in Dubuque County is 15% or less for at least two consecutive weeks AND the Dubuque County vaccination rate is at 25% or above. (See website <https://www.cityofdubuque.org/2831/Local-COVID-19-Updates>)

1. Health and Safety Measures

- *Safety equipment* will be provided by the church in the office, basement, and sanctuary. The Church Administrator will be responsible for monitoring levels of supplies and ordering additional supplies as needed
 - Disposable masks (for those who don't bring their own)
 - Latex-free gloves
 - Hand-sanitizer
 - Alcohol-based cleaning wipes for surfaces
 - Thermometer (office entrance ONLY)
- *Cleaning protocols* will be monitored and ensured by the Personnel Committee to reduce risk
 - *Once ONLY* thorough cleaning of entire building
 - *Weekly* thorough cleaning of office spaces, office kitchen area, all bathrooms
 - *Monthly* thorough cleaning of Sanctuary, basement, and other areas utilized

2. Church Office

- Staff will work primarily from the office. Work-from-home may be approved on a case by case basis in coordination with the Personnel Committee
- The Church office will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am-1pm
- Staff and visitors will continue to:
 - Wear masks covering mouth and nose at all times, unless in an area alone, with the door closed
 - Practice social distancing of 6 feet or greater
 - Be responsible for cleaning the spaces utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes

3. Church activities

- Groups willing and able to strictly adhere with the following protocols will be permitted to meet at the church:
 - Wear masks covering mouth and nose at all times
 - Practice social distancing of 6 feet or greater
 - Be responsible for cleaning the spaces utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes
 - No food or drink will be served
- Sunday School will continue to be provided virtually
- Groups are highly encouraged to meet using Zoom or outdoors until all members of that group have been vaccinated

4. Corporate Worship

- In order to guarantee enough space for social distancing, those wishing to attend worship in person will sign up week-by-week using a *Google Form* emailed out every Monday **OR** by calling in their sign-up to the church office (563-582-4494) before Thursday at 11am
- Participants may sign-up in a group with their “bubble,” ie: if the group is already socializing outside of church, then they may choose to attend worship together. Each “bubble” only needs to use one Google Form. Each “bubble” must not be greater than four people; unless they are an *immediate* family group
- Live streaming will continue to provide the ability to join in worship virtually
- As worship participants enter, the following materials will be readily available:
 - Bulletin for worship
 - Monthly newsletters
 - Disposable masks (for those who don’t bring their own)
 - Hand-sanitizer
 - Alcohol-based cleaning wipes for surfaces
- All who attend worship agree to:
 - Wear masks covering their mouth and nose at all times, including when singing or joining in corporate prayer/responses
 - Practice 6-ft social distancing (unless in a bubbly/family unit)
 - Move directly to their seat upon entering the building
 - Socialize outdoors
- Other considerations:
 - Available seating will be clearly marked
 - Joys and Concerns will be included in worship
 - Bibles and Hymnals will be available in the pews
 - Participants will carry all personal belongings with them to their seat
 - Bulletins will remain simplified
 - No Offering will be collected during worship
 - No Kid’s Activity Bags will be provided; caregivers are encouraged to bring quiet activities for their children
 - No Coffee Hour will be held
- In the event a spike in positivity rates causes the sudden need to revert backwards to a prior stage, this will be clearly communicated in multiple formats

Stage 4 - CURRENT STAGE

Enter if the 14-day positivity rate of COVID-19 in Dubuque County is 10% or less for at least two consecutive weeks AND the Dubuque County vaccination rate is at 50% or above **OR** as determined by the Session. (See website <https://www.cityofdubuque.org/2831/Local-COVID-19-Updates>).

1. Health and Safety Measures - SAME AS STAGE 3

2. Church Office - SAME AS STAGE 3

3. Church activities

- Groups willing and able to strictly adhere with the following protocols will be permitted to meet at the church:
 - Wear masks covering mouth and nose at all times
 - Practice social distancing of 6 feet or greater
 - Be responsible for cleaning the spaces utilized with alcohol-based cleaning wipes
 - No food or drink will be served
- Sunday School will continue to be provided as appropriate
- Groups are highly encouraged to meet using Zoom or outdoors until all members of that group *have had the opportunity to be vaccinated*
- Groups meeting outside the church building should use their discretion regarding the safety and protection of their group and proceed with an abundance of caution

4. Corporate Worship

- In-person worship will be held simultaneously with live-stream virtual worship
- Participants attending in-person worship agree to:
 - Insofar as possible, sit in the same pew with their “bubble,” ie: if the group is already socializing outside of church to allow for distancing as much as possible.
 - Wear masks covering their mouth and nose at all times, including when singing or joining in corporate prayer/responses
 - Practice 6-ft social distancing as much as possible (unless in a bubbly/family unit)
 - Move directly to their seat upon entering the building
 - Socialize outdoors as much as possible
- Other considerations:
 - Joys and Concerns will be included in worship
 - Bibles and Hymnals will be available in the pews
 - Participants will carry all personal belongings with them to their seat
 - Bulletins will remain simplified
 - No Offering will be collected during worship
 - No Kid’s Activity Bags will be provided; caregivers are encouraged to bring quiet activities for their children
 - No Coffee Hour will be held

- As worship participants enter, the following materials will be readily available:
 - Bulletin for worship
 - Monthly newsletters
 - Disposable masks (for those who don't bring their own)
 - Hand-sanitizer
 - Alcohol-based cleaning wipes for surfaces
- In the event a spike in positivity rates causes the sudden need to revert backwards to a prior stage, this will be clearly communicated in multiple formats

Stage 5

*Enter if the 14-day positivity rate of COVID-19 in Dubuque County is 5% or less for at least two consecutive weeks AND the Dubuque County vaccination rate is at 75% or above; **OR** as determined by the Session. (See website <https://www.cityofdubuque.org/2831/Local-COVID-19-Updates>)*

This stage would essentially mean returning to pre-COVID-19 style of church function. It will only be implemented if the Session determines, in consultation with CDC and the local health department, that underlying risks are significantly reduced or eliminated such as the development of a cure or an effective vaccine.

Appendix 1: Sample Google Form for Worship Sign-up

Sunday, March 28, 2021 Worship Sign-up

Thank you for taking the time to complete this sign-up form. If you need assistance completing the form, please contact Pastor Stephanie Ells at fpcdbq.pastor@gmail.com.

*** Required**

Email address *

Your email

*

☐

By checking this box, I affirm I have reviewed and will follow the Stage 3 COVID-19 Protocol approved by the Elders of First Presbyterian Church.

What is your name? *

Your answer

How many people will be attending with you? *

☐

Only myself

☐

1 additional person

☐

2 additional people

☐

3 additional people

☐

Other:

Please list the phone number at which we can best reach you. *

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

Submit

Appendix 2: Google Form Instructions

To complete the Google Form:

1. **Type your email** (as the person completing the form) in the space provided. This will be the email your sign-up confirmation will be sent to.
2. **Check the box** to acknowledge you (and all members of the group attending with you) will follow the Stage 3 COVID-19 Protocol approved by the Elders of First Presbyterian Church.
3. **Type your name** into the space provided so we know who is completing the form.
4. **Check the appropriate circle** with how many additional people will be attending with you. Remember, you may sign-up in a group with your “bubble” and each “bubble” only needs to complete one Google Form. A “bubble” is considered a group already socializing outside of church. Each “bubble” must not be greater than 4 people; *unless* they are an *immediate* family group.
5. **List *the best* phone number** we can reach you at in case the need arises.
6. **Click the grey “Submit” button** one time.
7. **Watch the email you entered** into the form for confirmation your reservation was received. If you do not receive a confirmation, please contact the church office at 563-582-4494. You will also receive an email reminder of how to prepare for worship and what to expect when you arrive.
8. **What do I do if I receive a notification sign-ups are full?** *Join us online for worship!* We are sorry you were unable to sign-up, but in order to keep the Sanctuary at a capacity which facilitates maintaining a 6 ft physical distance, space is limited. We encourage you to respond first thing on Mondays if you plan to attend in-person worship. If you have tried for more than one week to attend, and have been unable to, please contact Pastor Stephanie directly at 507-227-8537 and she will assist you.

Appendix 3: Call-in Instructions

To call-in your in-person worship sign-up:

- 1. Call the First Presbyterian Church Office** at 563-582-4494 and leave a message with the following information:
 - a. Your name**
 - b. The number of people attending with you**

Remember, you may sign-up in a group with your “bubble” and each “bubble” only needs to sign-up once. A “bubble” is considered a group already socializing outside of church. Each “bubble” must not be greater than 4 people; unless they are an immediate family group.
 - c. The best phone number to call to confirm your sign-up**
- 2. You will receive a phone call back within 24-hours to inform you if your sign-up was accepted or not.** If sign-ups are full, you will be notified and invited to join us online for worship. In order to keep the Sanctuary at a capacity which facilitates maintaining a 6 ft physical distance, space is limited. If you have tried for more than one week to attend, and have been unable to, please contact Pastor Stephanie directly at 507-227-8537 and she will assist you.

Appendix 4 - Sanctuary Set-up Pictorial

Gold and white ropes will be hanging on the sides of pews to indicate where to sit to allow for the recommended 6 ft distancing.

