

Highland Presbyterian Church Plan for Inside Worship v4

Sanctuary Worship

P1 Eugene Peterson's introduction to Revelation in "The Message", states, "Our times are not propitious (*favorable*) for worship. The times never are. The world is hostile to worship. The Devil hates worship. As the Revelation makes clear, worship must be carried out under conditions decidedly uncongenial to it....". Our times, in 2020, are indeed not favorable for worship, but community worship is a critical aspect of our faith's tradition. This document presents a plan for safe worship inside Highland Presbyterian Church based on the latest, most reliable data and authoritative guidelines.

Background

P2 The recommendations in this document are a continuation of the reopening process that has been ongoing and builds on the "Highland Presbyterian Church Plan for reopening" document that was approved by Session and Presbytery in July 2020. This process has gone well with no significant events of noncompliance. The initiation of outside Worship services has also gone well with excellent compliance of social distancing and wearing of facial coverings. The outdoors worship has been well received by the 50-60 weekly attenders. Up until now, weather has allowed the Sunday services to go on as scheduled. The current plan is for this outside service to continue until mid-October.

P3 Although progress has been made in treating Covid-19 disease and in developing a vaccine, we do not seem to be close to a time when our activities and behaviors will be uninhibited by the concern for this virus. However, enough experience has been accumulated to be reasonably comfortable that wearing a face covering, maintaining social distancing of 6', hand hygiene, and sheltering when ill reduces the risk of spreading Covid-19 infection. Outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities and the factors putting one at risk inside seem to be the size of the inside space both in terms of allowing social distancing and providing adequate air circulation. The other factor is the time that one would be in the indoor space. There is no incontrovertible scientific evidence regarding any of this, only observational studies and experience.

P4 Highland Presbyterian Church offers an ideal setting for limited indoor worship services. The narthex space is large both in square feet and in volume. We are also blessed with a sanctuary space that is large in square feet and volume. There is at least 10% fresh air contribution in the ventilation but the air is not medically filtered.

P5 A study of the sanctuary done by measuring the number and length of the pews shows that about 80 people could be seated while being socially distanced. This count does not include people sitting within the chancel. The first three middle pew rows were excluded from sitting to maintain a 20' distance from any unmasked speaker in the center of the chancel. An alternative plan of providing Plexiglas shielding for the speaker is being developed and once implemented will allow for the use of the middle three rows of pews. Every other row will be left empty to be sure the social distancing covers 360 degrees. The calculation used family units in a similar proportion seen at the outdoor worship service. It is possible that with random seating but the same 6', 360-degree distancing, a few additional people could be safely seated in the sanctuary. The unrestricted capacity of our sanctuary is 585.

P6 Although our virtual “Sunday” services have been well done and well received, the Audio-Visual portion of our Worship and Music Enhancement Project is nearing completion which would allow for live streaming of services in the sanctuary. This could also be recorded and seen at other times on YouTube or made into a DVD and mailed to those who could not attend and also have no ability to see a service on-line.

Resumption of Sanctuary Worship Services

P7 Congregation members and visitors will enter the building for the sanctuary service through Door #4 if they are using the larger parking lot. For those needing closer parking the administrative Door, #10, will be available. Everyone will be required to wear a facial covering, have a temperature scan and be below 100.3 degrees F, confirm that they are not sick or in quarantine and use a hand sanitizer. The Greeters at doors #10 and #4 will take the temperature with a non-touch device and also be sure everyone entering is aware of the requirements to enter.

P8 Greetings with physical contact, touching, hugging or shaking hands, will not be allowed. Conversations will be allowed at social distance but prolonged indoor conversations will be discouraged. The same behavior will be expected on leaving the building after the service. Longer conversations can occur outside of the building respecting social distance guidelines.

P9 No food or beverage will be served or allowed in the building during the service but the water fountains will be accessible.

P10 The restrooms by the McClintock Chapel will be available with a limit of two occupants at a time. The doors into the restrooms will be propped open to avoid the need to touch the door surfaces. Disinfectant wipes to clean and disinfect surfaces touched will be provided for individual clean-up.

Entering and Exiting the sanctuary

P11 Ushers will direct your entrance into the Sanctuary. Before entering, 6’ social distancing will be maintained for individuals or family units and floor marks will indicate safe spacing. Once in the sanctuary, ushers using 6’ measure to assure adequate social distancing and will direct people to their seats. All hymnals and papers will have been removed from the pews. At the conclusion of the service the ushers will dismiss by rows to maintain social distancing.

Singing and music

P12 There will be no choir unless it is virtually prepared and projected. Unmasked soloists maintaining the 20’ chancel distance will be allowed but they will be amplified to avoid the need to vigorously project their voice. Instruments will be allowed with 6’ distancing with the exception of the flute which will require 20’ distancing.

The congregation will be allowed to hum but actual singing will be discouraged.

Speaking

P13 The speakers on the chancel will be unmasked when they are at the lectern and maintaining the 20’ distancing from the congregation. When not speaking on the chancel face coverings will be worn. Congregational responses will be allowed but with a soft non-projecting voice while maintaining the face covering.

Offering

P14 Since ushers will not pass offering plates, offering will be accepted in non-touch containers provided in narthex. This may be done before or at the end of the service.

Friendship Pad

P15 The friendship pads will be removed and not used.

Communion

P16 Communion will use commercially prepared, sealed units containing a bread wafer and a small sealed cup of juice. These individually placed units will be picked up from a table in the narthex prior to entering the sanctuary.

Baptism

P17 Single baptisms will be allowed and encouraged. The pastor officiating will use hand sanitizer prior to the ceremony and water that is chlorinated.

Capacity

P18 The ushers will determine that if and when the sanctuary has reached its safe capacity, people can be directed to the overflow area which will be in the narthex. Chair racks will be available to sit and space attendees as needed.

Social Distancing for Clergy

P19 Areas in the narthex will be prepared with a 6' radius outline such that after the service, with the pastor at the center to remain socially distanced, he/she will be able to personally communicate with members in need. When weather permits, pastors can greet members outside for short interactions.

Childcare

P20 At least initially, it is not anticipated that childcare and nursery will be provided. Infants and children under two years of age will not be required to wear a facial covering. For families with infants or children who do not feel comfortable in the sanctuary, an area where the service can be seen and heard will be provided in Fellowship Hall. Ushers will be provided for the Fellowship Hall seating.

Cleaning and Decontamination

P21 After the service, the sanctuary will be cleaned in the usual fashion by the housekeeping staff following their usual precautions. If the sanctuary is not going to be used for five days but is clean, it does not have to be decontaminated as the virus will not survive when exposed beyond three days. If use is planned within that time all surfaces that could have been touched should be disinfected. All surfaces in the narthex, restrooms and hallways should be disinfected following cleaning.