

In-Person Worship FAQ

We are excited to join together in worship again, and we are also aware that being in big groups will be quite an adjustment for many of us. People will have different levels of comfort and different hopes and expectations about what it will look like. For some of us, the worship practices named below may feel unsettling, and we want to make space for that. For the last year we have had to learn to trust our fear around physical space and touching, and now that most of our community is vaccinated we are having to unlearn that fear.

This year we have learned that we can do hard things. The in-person adjustment is just one more opportunity to practice loving God and neighbor as we move through the fear, uncertainty, and awkwardness of this season to find the joy of communal worship again.

Will we be wearing masks?

Those who are fully vaccinated are not required to wear a mask. They may choose to do so if they prefer. We are requiring anyone who is not fully vaccinated to continue to wear a mask, including children over the age of two.

Will we be physically distancing?

Distancing restrictions have been lifted, so no seating will be blocked off. For the rest of June, we are limited to 50% capacity (300 people total), so there will be more room to physically distance. After July 1 that restriction will be lifted as well.

What happens if there are more than 300 people for June's services?

We are asking everyone to [sign up on the form provided](#). If we reach capacity, we'll have to make some adjustments. Our goal is to allow everyone who is interested in a June date to be able to come to *at least one* of the in-person services. If we exceed 300, we will reach out by phone or email to ask some people to wait.

Will we have communion? How will that work?

The CDC has made clear that Covid is transmitted by aerosols (when you breathe) and not by droplets (that might land on things), so we will do regular communion, with the added request that you sanitize your hands on the way up. An elder or pastor will break off a piece of bread and give it to you, and you can dip it in the common cup. Elders and pastors will (as usual) sanitize their hands before touching the elements. We will also have individual cup and wafer packets available at each communion station.

Will we be able to sing?

Yes. There are no restrictions for singing. Windows and doors will be opened to maximize air flow in the building.

How will we do the passing of the peace?

You can safely shake hands and even hug if you are vaccinated. But please know that not everyone will be ready for this right away. If you reach out your hand to shake and someone doesn't reciprocate, please don't take it personally. Offer an elbow bump or just say, "God's peace" or "peace be with you." Feel free to express your preferences. When in doubt, ask!

Are there going to be options for kids, like nursery, praise and play, and Children's Worship?

Nursery and Praise & Play (newborn - age 3): *We are hopeful that we'll be able to offer these later in the summer but we won't be able to right away. The lower level is in the last stages of renovation, but it will be a few weeks before it is complete. This affects the rooms for nursery and P&P.* Children this age are (as always) welcome in the sanctuary. With more of them it will probably be a little noisier than usual but that will be welcome after a year of silence in that space! We are planning on making some space in the narthex and providing toys for little ones who need a break. Parents are welcome to supervise their children in that space, and continue to listen to the service on the loudspeaker.

Children's Worship (age 4-2nd grade): A form of CW will be held outside (weather permitting) under tents in the parking lot behind the building. Children should wear masks and we'll encourage social distancing as much as possible. All volunteers will be fully vaccinated. CW will start with a children's blessing after the offering like usual.

What about coffee, lemonade and snacks?

We will not have coffee or snacks until the fall. You are welcome to bring your own beverage in a travel mug. Once and a while we will have ice cream bars outside.

Water fountains?

We will block off the water fountains because we think it will be the children who will most likely try to use them, and they can not yet be vaccinated. You can fill up a water bottle in the bathroom or in the narthex kitchen.

What if I'm not comfortable?

Take your time. Do what seems right for you, and also know that the staff, pastors, elders, and the covid-response team are listening to the CDC and medical experts to make sure that our communal worship is as low-risk as is possible. There is inherently some risk in gathering together, but the risk is low and the vast majority of our congregation over 12 has already been vaccinated. We will livestream the service so that people can continue to worship at home.

I have more questions.

Send your questions to the staff (office@shermanstreetchurch.org) or call the office (616-452-7034). If we don't have an answer for you we'll do our best to figure it out!