

Recommendations from the Wellness Committee
for safe occupancy of the Sanctuary.
June 12, 2020

Purpose statement:

It is the task of the Wellness Committee to provide protocols for opening the sanctuary of the First Congregational Church of Princeton, United Church of Christ for the purpose of Sunday morning worship services. Through the plans and protocols set forth in this document we seek to comply with the government regulations for allowing building occupancy as well as provide the best possible health and safety precautions for our employees and attendees during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Distancing: The following procedures are to address the occupancy, seating, face coverings, entry and exit of the building to provide a safe, comfortable and meaningful worship experience.

Occupancy:

- The 40% occupancy limit for the main sanctuary floor level would be 80 attendees/staff combined. Initially, we will consider 60 persons to be a manageable limit.
- A single entry will be set up to allow for monitoring number of persons attending as well as to provide masks for attendees as needed.
- While we do not expect the number of attendees to exceed the occupancy limit, we do have capabilities through our church website to allow worshippers to reserve a seat in advance.
- We also plan to continue to video the worship service to allow people to experience the service from the safety of their home.
- To promote adequate ventilation, windows and doors will be opened before, during and left open for a period of 15 minutes after the sanctuary has been vacated.

Seating:

- Attendees who are NOT part of the same immediate household must be seated at least 6 feet apart. Members of the same immediate household are permitted to sit together, less than 6 feet apart. Signage will be posted at the point of entry to the building and again at the sanctuary entrance notifying worshippers of the need to social distance.
- To allow for proper social distancing, pew rows will be roped off in a manner to best attain the required 6 feet of separation.
- Markings will be placed on the available pews to signify at least 6 foot spacing. Aisle space will also be considered so that persons are not seated near persons moving in the aisle.

Face Coverings:

- Face coverings will be required for ALL persons upon entry to the building and throughout their stay.
- Although we understand that some persons may have medical or personal reasons for not wearing a mask, we feel that for the health, safety and peace-of-mind of our community of worshippers there can be NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule. We, the Wellness Committee, feel that if there is a reason why you are uncomfortable or unsafe wearing a mask we want you to remain “safer at home.”
- In the same manner, we understand that many of our church family may be at higher risk because of age, underlying health conditions, or other personal reasons. You will be with us in spirit and we hope that you will be able to worship with us via technology.
- All Children’s programming such as the Children’s Message and Sunday School Classes will be suspended. No nursery care will be available. Children over the age of 2 will be expected to wear a face covering also.
- Again, to provide the safest possible environment for all worshippers we need to make **face masks mandatory**.
- Rev. Janet will have a KN95 mask to wear. The state guidelines allow for a leader or celebrant to remove her face covering while conducting the service, especially during the sermon as long as she is at least 6 feet away from other persons. Those distances are being roped off.

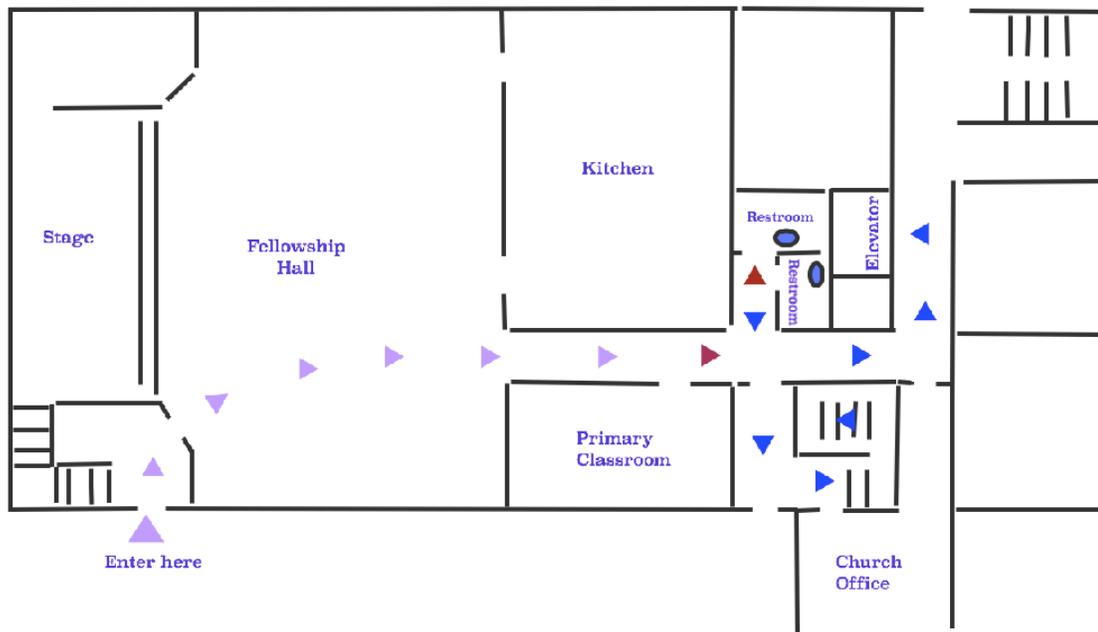
Government Guidelines:

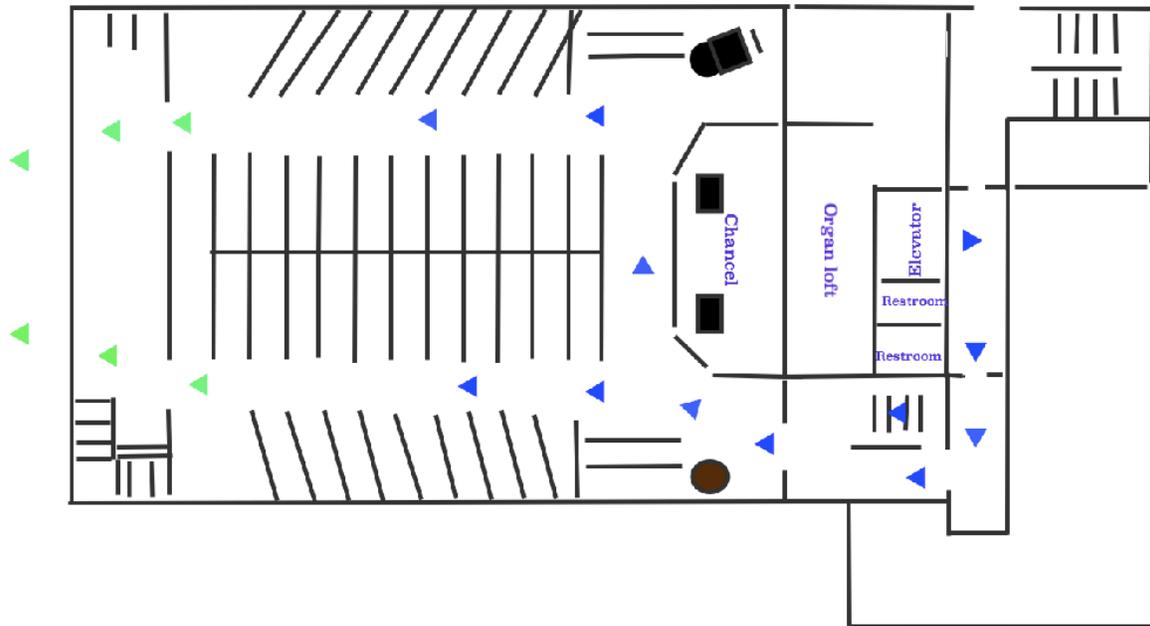
- We have seen restrictions, regulations and protocols change over time as data comes into the state agencies. We, the Wellness Committee, pledge to continue to stay up to date with the latest regulations and as we get more comfortable with our own procedures we will be able to reevaluate and revise as appropriate. Our utmost concern is for each person’s health and safety.

Entry Procedure: To allow for orderly, safe and comfortable entry and exit from the sanctuary we have developed the following detailed plan. See maps for visual explanation.

- All attendees will enter through the fellowship hall door closest to Mountain Road. A masked, socially distanced usher will be there to greet and count persons as they enter. Masks will also be available for persons who do not have one.
- All doors will be propped open during the 20 minutes before the service to eliminate the need to touch doorknobs.
- A roped off corridor will be established through fellowship hall. It is our hope that using the fellowship hall as an entry point will allow shelter from inclement weather and heat.

- Appropriate 6 ft distances will be marked off on the floor. If we find that waiting becomes an issue we will provide seating for those that cannot stand. Seating will be wiped down before another person utilizes the chair.
- The front of the line will be the door entering the new building. Here persons will be asked to use a bathroom to thoroughly wash their hands with soap and hot water. The doors will be propped open and use of paper towels on the faucet handles is expected. Hand sanitizer is also available at entry and exit doors.
- We plan to have a masked usher in this area also to answer any questions and provide directions as needed.
- After washing hands, persons can proceed to the carpeted office stairs to go up to the sanctuary, or move to the elevator if needed.
- Once up to the sanctuary level, entry will be through the front south door. Bulletins will be available on the table there along with any other items for the worship service.
- Signage will again remind people who are not of the same household to social distance.
- To maintain the one-way aisles, attendees will be welcome to either proceed down the south aisle or cross in front of the chancel and enter the north aisle. They will be able to select the available (non-roped off) pew of their choice.





- We hope that at this time you will smile - with your eyes - and wave to others. It will also be a wonderful time to reflect and listen to the prelude as you prepare your heart for worship.

Worship Service: As a result of our new normal, the service will be different. Here are a few changes you will notice.

- When the service begins, the downstairs doors will be closed and all propped doors will also be closed by an usher. If you arrive late, please follow the same entry procedure as outlined above. You may want to keep a paper towel from washing your hands to open doors as you come into the sanctuary.
- In an abundance of caution, we will not be having any choral or congregational singing. As we progress through the stages of reopening and guidelines allow, we hope that we will once again be able to sing God's praise abundantly.
- Our lectionary reader will be seated at the front of the sanctuary (to maintain one way aisle) and read from the usual lectern. We do not want to share microphones.
- We will not be sharing the peace or taking up the offering as usual. Instead we will dedicate a few reflective moments to allow for the preparation of gifts/offerings/donations which can be placed in a receptacle in the narthex as you exit.
- At the end of the service Rev. Janet, in her mask, will pronounce the benediction from the back of the sanctuary. She will then move to the center of the outside porch to connect (while maintaining social distance) with worshippers as they leave.

Exiting the Sanctuary

- Ushers will dismiss rows from the back of the sanctuary in a gradual fashion to maintain social distancing.
- Those present who require the use of the elevator will be dismissed last so that they may safely exit through the front south door to the elevator.
- Windows will remain open for 15 minutes after the attendees have left the sanctuary. Then an usher will close the windows and doors.

Cleaning and Disinfecting:

- The building will be cleaned and disinfected on its regular weekly schedule.
- Any COVID-19 related information, such as contact or positive test information, that is reported to the church office will be shared with the appropriate local and state agencies.

Procedure Review Process:

- This document will be distributed to the Church Council for review, discussion, and alteration as needed for final approval. (*completed 6/15/2020*)
- The approved document will be submitted to Princeton Emergency Manager John Bennett for his consideration and comment. Again, changes will be made if required before the process is instituted. (*approved 6/18/2020*)

Comments and Concerns:

- Anyone with comments, questions, or concerns should email their thoughts to the church office at churchoffice@firstchurchprinceton.org with subject of "Wellness Committee."
- You may also reach out to a member of the Wellness Committee. We will continue to meet regularly and your thoughts and feedback are helpful for our planning.

Respectfully submitted,

The Wellness Committee:

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Jennifer LaBaire, Council chairperson

Paul Skagerlind, Deaconate chairperson

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