



May 26, 2020

**Revised June 26, 2020**

Dear members and friends of Reformation Church,

It is with gratitude to God and hopefulness for the future that I write on behalf of the Session to announce the procedures for reopening our worship services on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>. After two and a half months, we will gather together to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as well as enjoy in-person fellowship. However, for the health and safety of everyone, we must be careful and cautious. Before outlining the practical steps we will take to ensure a physically safer environment, it is important to communicate three principles.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

First, everyone must make their own decision regarding the risk of exposure to the virus and its impact upon personal health. However, we encourage people in the higher risk categories (over 65 and/or preexisting health conditions) to use greater caution.

Second, our worship experience will be different. There will be fewer people in the buildings and restrictions on our personal interaction. For the safety of everyone, we must be willing to change our behavior out of Christ-like love and sacrifice. Therefore, if you experience a sense of frustration that “things aren’t like they used to be,” then please consider Christ, who left behind the joy, purity, and glory of heaven for our sake. Likewise, in love consider the health of your brothers and sisters. Let us come together, not looking to our own interests, but with a heart to encourage and bless each other. Personally, I am preparing my heart for corporate worship to feel different. But I am excited to see you again, and I am confident that the joy of being together will overshadow the changes.

Third, although we are a loving congregation that enjoys showing affection through hugging and shaking hands, we must refrain from physical contact and maintain “social distancing.” Let’s enjoy fellowship in a safe manner for the current season.

#### PRACTICAL STEPS

Much prayer and discussion by many people has gone into developing the safety policies that we will enact. On Monday, the Session approved a proposal by the Safety and Security Team that seeks to provide a safe, organized, and touch-less environment for members and visitors to worship with as minimal change as possible to our normal routine. The information below is intended to prepare you for what you may expect should you and your family return to worship this Sunday.

The buildings will be open at 10:15. Upon arrival to the sanctuary or Kirkside Hall, the doors will be propped open so that no one has to touch door handles. An usher will greet you and your family. **Until further notice, all worshippers will be required to wear face coverings upon entering and exiting the church. Face coverings may only be removed during the sermon and must be put back on after the sermon ends. Children under 11 will not be required to wear face coverings.** Face coverings will be available for those who do not have them. If you have a face covering, please bring it to save the church the expense. The usher will seat you in designated rows (every other row will remain empty) from the front to the back, much like a wedding service. Families will be seated together in the middle section in a single pew in order to maximize pews. Couples and singles will be

seated in the transepts, spaced six feet apart. The balcony will be closed. When the sanctuary is filled to a capacity of 80 people, ushers will direct people to the fellowship hall.

A live video feed will be presented in the fellowship hall so that worshippers will hear and *see* the pastors and musicians. The fellowship hall will have a capacity of 40 worshippers. It will also have the advantage of wider spacing of chairs. With fewer people and wider spacing, the fellowship hall may be a safer environment. Therefore, you may request seating in the fellowship hall before the sanctuary is filled.

In order to touch as little as possible, we will use bulletins only; all hymnals and attendance pads have been taken up. Bulletins will be placed in available seats prior to the service. We will not take up an offering. Instead, the offering plates will be positioned at the doors of the sanctuary and the entrance to the fellowship hall for you to deposit your offering before the service.

Singing while wearing a face covering is a little more challenging. Therefore, we will sing fewer verses of each hymn or song.

At the conclusion of the service, worshippers will be released row by row from the back to the front. The pastors will not be stationed at the doors to greet people. Those who wish to visit after the service are asked not to congregate at the front of the buildings or in the parking lot.

**The Session has set July 12<sup>th</sup> as the next Lord's Supper Sunday.**

All of these accommodations are cumbersome, but necessary for a time. A time will come when we can ease these restrictions.

**Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of your shepherding group officers or pastors.**

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Let us look to him with confidence in these days, much like believers of the past who found a way to worship in spite of persecution, plague, or tragedy. The Lord is our joy. Let us find joy in him together. See you soon.

In Christ,

The Session of Reformation