



Four Oaks UMC

Protocols for Returning to In-Person Worship during COVID-19

Returning Team:

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Our Returning Team has met routinely throughout this pandemic to craft protocols for returning to in-person worship in a safe, effective way. The team consulted Bishop Ward's recommendations for our NC Conference, data from the CDC, information from medical personnel, case studies, and feedback from other local churches. The following social distancing protocols were designed under such guidance in the hopes of providing a safe environment for us to worship together and honor one another's physical, mental, and spiritual health.

- In-Person Worship will resume Easter Sunday, April 4
- Maximum Capacity: 70*

*If you plan to attend worship in person, you must RSVP to Shannon Hill via call, text, or email (757-329-2725, deryckandshannonhill@yahoo.com).

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others"

-*Philippians 2:1-4*

Considerations Before Attending Worship

- If you are in the high-risk category for contracting COVID-19 (older adults and those with underlying medical conditions) and have not been fully vaccinated, please strongly consider remaining at home and continuing to worship with us online.
- If you have recently experienced a fever or any symptoms of illness, please stay home and continue to worship online.
- Masks will be **required** for those attending in-person worship with the exceptions provided by the CDC (children under the age of 2 and those with disabilities). Cloth masks for all ages will be available at church if you do not have one.
- Please plan to refrain from any physical contact and maintain a minimum distance of six feet from others at all times.
- ***Worship will begin promptly at 11am.*** Due to social distancing seating requirements, please plan to arrive early so we can get everyone seated and begin worship on time. The sanctuary doors will be opened thirty minutes prior to the service.
- Many of the rooms and areas of our church will be marked off with blue tape and signs. Please abide by these signs and refrain from entering these areas.

Arriving and Entering The Sanctuary

- The front door of the sanctuary will be the only entrance for worship. The fellowship hall will be open solely for the purpose of using the restrooms. The fellowship hall will be locked ten minutes before the service begins (10:50am).
- Greeters will be present outside in front of the sanctuary and in the sanctuary vestibule (entrance area) as you arrive to answer any questions you may have.
- Everyone is encouraged to use the hand sanitizer in the church vestibule upon entering. Please remember to have your mask on before entering the sanctuary.
- An offering plate will be placed behind the last pew where you can drop your tithes/offerings upon entering/exiting.
- Upon entering the sanctuary, ushers will guide you to the next available pew.
 - Worshipers will not be able to choose their own seats. Worshipers will be seated upon arrival in every other pew starting from the front of the sanctuary and moving toward the back. Blue tape will designate six-foot sections in each pew to help maintain proper distance.

Bathrooms

- Social distancing should be maintained while using the bathrooms. Please practice the three W's:
 - (1) **Wash** your hands with soap and warm water thoroughly for *at least* twenty seconds after using the bathroom. Parents, please ensure your children wash their hands properly.
 - (2) **Wear** your mask at all times in the church building.
 - (3) **Wait** six feet away until the bathroom becomes available.

During Worship

- There will be no paper bulletins. Each Sunday's worship outline will be included in each week's Saturday Bulletin. The outline will also be projected on the sanctuary screens during worship.
- There will be no acolytes or crucifers.
- There will be no physical Passing of the Peace, chancel choir, congregational singing, passing the offering plate, or Holy Communion.
- There will be no nursery or child care provided. However, if parents need to step out of worship with their child(ren), they may use the nursery room downstairs. If the nursery is occupied, the Pre-K Sunday School class may also be used.
 - Parents, the toys in these rooms will not be available to use so as to minimize surfaces and objects that need disinfecting. Please bring a book or toy from home to occupy your child if you need to utilize these rooms.

Exiting The Sanctuary After Worship

- As the service concludes, Joey will ask everyone to remain seated until the ushers come and dismiss each pew. Ushers will dismiss worshipers one pew at the time to maintain six feet of distance, beginning with the back pews and moving toward the front.
- Please take your masks home with you to keep. Do not discard them or leave them somewhere in the church. If you receive a mask at church, please launder it and use it for future services.
- If you would like to speak with Joey after the service, he will be waiting on the fellowship hall front porch. Please refrain from stepping *onto* the porch in order to maintain proper social distance.
- Please do not congregate at the bottom of the sanctuary stairs outside following the service. Remember people will be exiting the sanctuary behind you and will need sufficient space to descend the steps and walk to their vehicles. Please continue to wear your mask and maintain a minimum of six feet of distance until you leave the church premises.

Online Worship

- Worship services will continue to be streamed on our YouTube page for those who prefer to continue watching online.