

Guidelines for in-person worship at Rye Presbyterian Church Updated December 2020

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”

Psalm 122:1

In June of 2020, a reopening task force was established by the Session to deliberate carefully regarding the most prudent course going forward for our church. It studied recommendations and guidelines from the NYS Department of Health, the CDC, and Presbytery. The guiding principle of the task force has been to ensure the health and safety of our congregants and of our leadership.

Our live-stream services are going well with the permanent upgraded audio/visual system now being installed, and we feel that being cautious is prudent, especially with so many in our congregation having one or more COVID-19 risk factors. At the same time, with ongoing diligent care to follow cleaning and other recommendations, in-person worship should be minimally risky to many people.

The following are procedures for in-person worship in the RPC sanctuary:

1. Worship attendance is limited to allow for safe distancing for all present. For our sanctuary, that is between 100-125 people, depending on household size.
2. We will continue using our reservation system for worship. The link will be sent out via email and is available on the Worship page of the church website. You *must* register to attend worship each week so that we can maintain the mandated attendance limits. You will be asked your family name, and how many from your family will be attending. If the service registration fills to capacity, your name will be placed on a waiting list, with notifications sent out if a space opens up.
3. We request that you attend only if you are healthy, are showing no signs or symptoms of illness, and have not had any known exposure to COVID-19 in the preceding two weeks. If you have any symptoms, *please stay home*. You can still watch the worship via YouTube or Zoom.
4. We ask that you follow the current NYS travel advisories and restrictions if you have recently been outside the state.
5. If you are in a high risk group due to health issues or age (over 65), the current recommendation is to continue to stay home. Please consider asking your doctor how prudent it is for you to attend worship in person at this point in time.
6. Since it may take more time than usual to get everyone in place, we ask that you plan to arrive at least ten minutes before the start of the service.
7. You *must* wear a mask at all times during the service. You are encouraged to bring your own, though we will have a limited supply of adult-sized masks if you should forget yours.
8. You will be asked to use hand sanitizer before entering the sanctuary.
9. For entry into the church everyone will use the main sanctuary doors facing the Post Road. Ushers will be there to greet you, confirm your good health, and help you find a seat safely distanced from other congregants, filling the available pews from front to back if space is tight.
10. There will be no child care or Sunday School, but children are welcome to sit with their families during worship. Children over two years of age are required to wear masks. We will provide coloring pages and illustrated children’s bulletins that will be connected to each Sunday’s readings.
11. For a time, worship will look and sound different.
 - Upon entering the sanctuary, you will be asked to check in and then helped to find a place to sit. Families of five or less will be able to sit together.

- Pews will be marked off to maintain social distancing. Please do not sit in pews with the cushions turned up.
 - To increase air circulation, while the heat will be running, we will also have windows open. Please feel free to dress comfortably.
 - There will be no use of bibles or hymnals, which have been removed from the sanctuary.
 - There will be no congregational singing of the hymns. Hymns will still be included in the service and may be sung by those worshipping from home via our live stream broadcast.
 - There will be no physical contact with those outside family groups, such as handshakes or hugs.
 - There will be no offering plate passed. Offerings (with checks preferred) may be put in the offering plates at the exits.
12. Following worship, you will be asked to leave the sanctuary keeping six feet apart from others.
- With smaller congregation sizes, everyone may exit out the main entrance doors or steeple doors.
 - With a bigger crowd we will ask that people on the north side aisle exit through chapel doors, the center aisle through the main door, and those in the south aisle through the library door, with everyone practicing distancing.
 - To minimize crossing over, those nearest the doors will exit first.
 - There will be no Coffee Hour at this time.
13. We ask that you do not go to any other part of the building. Please use the restrooms only if absolutely necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. It is a lot to think about and keep in mind as we gather, but by taking these precautions we trust that we will be both glad and safe as we return to our “house of the Lord.”