

## **Communication from WPC Session on Upcoming Changes to COVID Policies for In-person Worship**

As many of you know the Session and Diaconate have been praying for quite some time about what to do next in reopening some of our ministries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over time we have found reasonable ways to accommodate in-person ministries within the church facilities such as worship services, the Lord's Supper, baptisms, the food ministry, a lady's Bible study, a funeral service, a wedding, a wedding reception, and Catechism Club. We most recently approved a way to accommodate fellowship events at the church and we hope to test this out soon with an outdoor ice-cream social after Knox White's installation service (weather permitting).

The Session's latest discussions along these lines have centered around how to provide more opportunities for worship and any related changes to our COVID-19 policies. Updates to our worship service policies related to COVID-19 are summarized in the attached brochure. The Session is making these changes for a variety of reasons including our assessment of the congregation's spiritual needs related to Biblical worship and fellowship, our assessment of the health risks related to making any changes, our new ability to live-stream in the fellowship hall because of a generous donation, installation of an ultraviolet (UV) ionization system within our air conditioning systems because of another generous donation, practices used by other churches in our Presbytery and our desire to maximize worship attendance and ministry activities while simultaneously accommodating a wide diversity of individual needs related to COVID-19 precautions. We are very aware that it is not possible to accommodate every individual need in our in-person worship settings. We hope and pray we have achieved a balance that will honor the Lord and follow his will for our congregation.

As noted above, we will soon be installing an ultraviolet (UV) ionization system within our sanctuary, fellowship hall and kitchen air handling systems. As many of you know, COVID-19 is known to break down quickly in the sunlight because of exposure to the sun's UV rays. The system we are installing has the potential to lower both bacterial and viral loads within the air conditioned space. These type systems offer no guarantees but have recently been recommended by the CDC for use in large group spaces. The system should be purchased and installed prior to the changes becoming effective.

Please be aware that as we implement these changes, we are seeing an increase in COVID-19 within Okaloosa County. The Session is very concerned about the rising new case levels and the rise in hospitalizations over the last two weeks. (You receive a summary of this assessment every week if you are seated for in-person worship). Now that reservations are not required, this assessment will be provided to the entire congregation each Thursday in This Week at WPC. We hope this will be useful in assessing whether you should attend worship on any given Sunday.

It is our sincere and humble plea for everyone to exercise a spirit of prayer, patience, unity, consideration of others, and flexibility as we work through these changes. We ask that everyone respect one another's individual choices in deciding, at any given time, whether it is safe enough to attend worship services and events at WPC. Above all we ask that you be in constant prayer over how we behave towards one another and how we might find new ways to accommodate unmet needs.

A Zoom orientation session will be scheduled for this Saturday, October 31<sup>st</sup> at 4 pm to explain the changes in greater detail. The Zoom link for this event is as follows: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81391487842>. The orientation session will be recorded and made available on-line for those not able to attend. The policy changes will be effective starting Sunday November 8<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, concerns or constructive feedback, please consider contacting your shepherding elder or you can also contact Gordon Eldridge at 850-496-5378.