



Seymour Regathering Plan and Covenant

Guidelines for Resuming In-Person Worship during COVID-19 Pandemic
–Revised September 22, 2020–

Recent weeks and months have been difficult for our world, our nation and our community of faith. Opinions and approaches have varied, sometimes widely, on how to best deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. This has and does include varying thoughts and intentions about when to resume in-person, in-sanctuary worship. The approaches of congregations range from those that have been worshipping in person throughout the stay-at-home orders to those who have already determined that they will not resume regular worship and church activities until sometime in 2021.

While originally we had hoped and planned on resuming in-sanctuary services in July, pandemic conditions in the area and improvements to our technology justified and allowed us to effectively transition to outdoor services. At present, after further discussions, discernment and prayer, the ministry staff and the church leadership have determined it is appropriate to move forward with resuming in-person, in-sanctuary services. As we do, we will continue to do our best to seek and listen to God’s leading, rely on the comfort of God’s grace and move forward with the confidence that we take from His power and providential care.

Our plan is to resume in-sanctuary services on September 27, 2020. When those services begin, there are a number of important procedures and guidelines that will be in place to reduce risk while we gather for worship.

Plan for Service Attendance

Service	Live-Stream	Face Masks	Singing
9:30 am	Yes	Required	Masks Required

As opposed to our previous plan, at present when we return to the sanctuary for our service, **there will only be a 9:30 am service.** Live streaming of the 9:30 am service will also occur. Masks will be required while inside the church building and for the entire service, with the exception of those executing various duties at the front of the church (preaching, liturgist, praise team).

In order to maintain recommended social distancing and be respectful of guidelines provided by authorities, several steps have been planned. We will be using every other pew/row as well as maintaining distance between family units in those rows. By taking this approach, we anticipate being able to accommodate 100-125 people using the sanctuary, including the balcony, as well as the Fellowship Room. We understand that there may be families that have been getting together the last

few months and thus have become “extended family units”. If you have been doing this, we encourage you to sit with your “extended family” without social distancing. By doing so, this will allow us to fit more people into the sanctuary.

The church entry doors will remain open, and the doors to the sanctuary and Fellowship Room will be held or propped open as well. This will be done to reduce touch points for attendees. **We ask that people enter the church through the South doors and proceed to the South entrances to the sanctuary where you will be ushered into the sanctuary.**

Offering plates will not be passed. Rather, a collection box will be placed at each exit door. We also encourage the use of online giving through our website (<https://seymourchurch.org/giving>).

Restrooms will be open. Drinking fountains will be closed, thus you may want to bring your own water bottle along, if needed.

At the end of the services, attendees will be dismissed a row at a time (similar to weddings) and encouraged to exit to the outdoors, avoiding gathering in the common areas. We haven't and won't be using the church mailboxes, so please don't go to that area to check for mail. For the time being, there will be no after service coffee/drinks/cookies served.

Questions to ask yourself before coming to church:

Do I have any unexpected symptoms (ie., if you worked in the yard all day Saturday, you might expect to be fatigued or have muscle aches) which may be associated with COVID-19?

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Have I been in close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID 19 in the last 14 days?

Have I been in close contact with anyone who has been in close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID 19 within the last 14 days?

If you answer yes to any of the above, we ask that you stay home and watch the live stream version of the service.

Ministry Postponement

In order to move safely into resumption of church life, we are postponing several ministries of the church. For the time being, Children's Nurseries, Little Lambs, Children's Worship, and GRACE will not take place at the church. Our Children's Ministry Director will continue to provide online lessons and monthly Adventure Boxes to those families who [request them](#). We will continue to monitor overall progress and take steps to resume those ministries in a careful way and at an appropriate time.

Building Safety

Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the building. Face masks will be made available upon request. However, due to limited stock, we ask our members to bring their own face masks if at all possible.

Custodial staff and others will sanitize restrooms and other surfaces that are commonly touched in between weekly services.

Personal Safety

We understand that not all of our congregants will be comfortable attending services at this time under these conditions. If, due to underlying health conditions or for other personal reasons, you are unsure or uncomfortable with the procedures we have established, we encourage you to remain home. We will continue to live stream our services (<https://seymourchurch.org/live>) as well as make recorded copies available. If you would like a DVD of the service mailed to you, please sign up for our DVD ministry through the church office (616-245-8726).

For those who do attend, we wish to reiterate the use of face masks and social distancing. Maintaining recommended social distance and the use of masks are considered to be the two best means of reducing the spread of the novel coronavirus. We also believe it is an important way to show love for our neighbors, especially to those with significant vulnerabilities.

Taking personal responsibility for maintaining the recommended social distance is a loving way to respect everyone's level of concern about and sensitivity to the current health crisis. We know all will be thrilled to be back together as a community. Nonetheless, for the time being, please maintain appropriate and safe distance.

The council and staff of Seymour are committed to making regathering a meaningful and safe experience. All of us who come back for communal worship at this time play an important role in reducing the risk during this pandemic. We are also aware that those steps taken to reduce risk cannot guarantee our safety. For that reason we ask that everyone prayerfully consider the steps that they will take as we transition back to in-person, joyful, and God honoring worship at Seymour Christian Reformed Church.