

COVID-19 Reopening Plan FAQs

As questions, comment, and concerns about the ERUCC COVID-19 Reopening Plan are voiced, we will add them to this FAQ so that everyone can stay current on the helpful additional information.

Question

In re-reading the guidelines for Step 2, I just noticed the statement regarding congregational singing. I sadly feel that is a very wise decision. What about choral singing? I greatly enjoy the ERUCC singers in this time of separation from the choir. However, they have not been wearing masks and they are singing right toward where the congregation will be sitting. None of the participants in the online services have been wearing masks. It says to wear masks when inside the buildings. Will that include EVERYONE? Will that be enforced?

Answer

The Reopening Team considered these issues carefully, including research into this topic via webinars and other writings aimed at organizations like churches and choruses. Because singing causes breath aerosols to travel further, no in-person service attendees will be seated in the first three pews in order to allow the smaller choir to sing. When not singing or reading, these service participants will be masked and sit in these closest three rows of pews. On this, one reason why we have stayed with a fixed choir in these times versus rotating among choir voices is because these volunteers are aware of and comfortable with each other's lack of COVID-19 exposures. Also, here are some helpful links on singing and COVID 19 that we drew upon and which might of interest:

- CDC document: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm>
- Article: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/29/germany-to-set-out-rules-for-religious-services-including-singing-ban>
- Article: <https://nafme.org/virtual-choirs/>
- Article: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-03-29/coronavirus-choir-outbreak>
- Article: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-06-01/coronavirus-choir-singing-cdc-warning>
- Webinar: <https://youtu.be/DFI3GsVzj6Q>

On the second good point, yes, everyone will need to wear a mask. If someone arrives for worship without a mask, one will provided for them.

On this, the Worship Team and Pastor Daniel will not be wearing masks when leading worship. This is to provide better sound for the live feed and in-person worship. More importantly, we have people in the deaf community participating who need to read lips and facial expressions. The Worship Team will, however, continue to practice physical distancing when leading worship. In addition, The Worship Team will continue to practice physical distancing and wear masks when not leading worship.

Though not specifically part of the question, here's an additional note on Coffee Fellowship.

While it would be great to gather in the Community Room following worship, we are not ready to propose returning to fellowship time in person. We believe the safest option for in-person worship is to have a shorter service and spend less than an hour in the building. Attendees are always welcome to hang out following worship in the parking lot and patio and front sidewalk — maintaining physical distance — and visit with one another. They can also use the church WiFi to connect with others for virtual coffee fellowship.