



# PEARCE CHURCH

## Regathering Safety Plan

July 16, 2020

This Safety Plan is intended to communicate the precautions Pearce Church is putting into place to minimize the spread of COVID-19. While we cannot guarantee a 100% germ-free environment, we desire to maintain the highest safety standards for our staff, volunteers, and church family. We understand there are numerous perspectives and concerns surrounding this virus, so Pearce will continue to provide multiple options to accommodate comfort levels, including live streamed worship and phone-streamed worship. If you are uncomfortable with any of the following and cannot attend until these parameters are removed, we respect your decision to stay home.

### Guiding Principles

**1. We seek to love our neighbor.**

We are commanded by God “to love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). We have a responsibility to each other, especially during this pandemic, to consider the needs of others, including their health and safety.

**2. Health and safety will be our priority.**

It is the desire of many to resume gathering as a church family and, while that is our goal, any plan to reopen will emphasize the safety of staff, volunteers, and church family. We want to practice caution in this process and will take our time to accommodate the intricacies of our facility and ministries.

**3. We will follow the federal and state guidelines.**

We will respect the guidelines issued by the government, on local, state, and national levels and those guidelines will serve as the foundation for our plan moving forward. Any and all social distancing standards, personal protective equipment, sanitation requirements, or other measures deemed necessary to allow us to safely gather as a church family will be implemented.

**4. We will follow the guidance from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**

We have used the CDC’s “Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith” to help direct and guide Pearce’s practices.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore, we will not fear...”

Psalm 46:1-2

### General Guidelines

#### Social Distancing

- To control the flow of people in and out of the building, specifically in the main lobby and Sanctuary, traffic flow sides will be marked and designated “in” and “out”. These will be marked with standing signs as well as floor signs.
- We ask everyone to maintain 6ft of space around them at all times (unless it is someone of the same household). Markers will be on the floor to help remind and denote 6ft distance in applicable areas.

- Please refrain from any handshakes, hugs, or other forms of physical contact for now. Consider waving, gesturing an “air hug”, or saying hello as an alternative.
- In tightly confined areas (e.g. stairways), occupants should limit space to one person at a time.
- At all times, staff and volunteers must ensure 6ft distance between personnel, unless safety or core function of the work activity requires a shorter distance.
- To ensure social distancing in the Sanctuary, pews will be roped-off to allow a minimum distance of least 6ft. We will encourage people to leave 6ft of space in between individuals or a family/couple of different households who may be in the same pew.
- Once the Sanctuary has reached the maximum allowable capacity, it will be closed and guests will be directed to the overflow area (i.e. Parmerter Chapel). The overflow area will be set up to allow for at least 6ft of distance between households.
- During a service, the worship team and pastor will maintain a 6ft distance (12ft, if singing) from each other. They will also maintain a 20ft distance away from the first section of pews.

#### **Personal Protective Equipment and Hygiene**

- Everyone who enters the building is required to wear a mask per NYS guidelines for Religious and Funeral Services. Acceptable masks include, but are not limited to, cloth masks, surgical masks, and face shields. Masks should be worn at all times while in the facility, as determined by Pearce leadership, and should cover both a person’s nose and mouth.
  - Please remember that wearing a mask protects your neighbor and your neighbor’s mask protects you. We ask the entire church family to give gentle and gracious reminders to those who may not have masks on at any point.
  - During the work week, Pearce staff are required to wear a mask in all common spaces. If seated at his/her own desk working and in the privacy of an office or not facing anyone with appropriate social distancing, the mask may be removed. If a staff member enters someone else’s office or turns to speak with a co-worker, masks should be worn.
- In the event a person does not have a mask or face covering or forgot theirs at home, Pearce will provide a surgical mask at no cost with a supply located at the health check station in the main lobby.
- Hand sanitizing stations are available throughout the building. People are encouraged to wash their hands or utilize sanitizing stations frequently.
- Pearce will supply protective gloves to any volunteer or staff member who would prefer to wear them while serving.
- Those leading worship (singers, pastor, etc.) will not wear a mask while on the platform, but shall immediately put on a mask when those duties are complete, prior to exiting the platform.
- We will prohibit shared food or beverage service until further notice. Drinking fountains around the building have been shut down to reduce any risk of virus spread.

### **Health Screening and Contact Tracing**

To minimize risk of virus transmission, Pearce and Pearce 4 Kids have implemented the following according to state and health authorities:

- If a person is feeling sick, has any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or are considered higher risk, please err on the side of caution and stay home.
- Monday through Friday between the hours of 6:30am and 6pm, all persons entering the building will go through a health check, which involves a temperature check and questionnaire.
- For worship services, all staff and volunteers (not attendees) will be required to go through a health check (temperature and questionnaire).
- A person who screens positive for COVID-19 symptoms and/or a temperature at 100 °F or higher will not be permitted to enter and will be sent home with instructions to contact their healthcare provider for assessment and testing.
- Pearce will maintain a continuous log of those entering the building and their health check information, if applicable; excluding deliveries that are performed with appropriate PPE or through contactless means.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- We will adhere to requirements from the CDC and Department of Health.
- Pearce will maintain a cleaning log on site that documents date, time, and scope of cleaning.
- Sanitizing stations will utilize alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60% or more alcohol and will be available throughout the building.
- Restrooms will be reduced in capacity, where feasible, to ensure distancing.
- We will regularly clean and disinfect the facility and playgrounds, and conduct more frequent cleaning and disinfection for high risk common areas (e.g. restrooms, door knobs).

## **Worship Services**

**Touchless Service** - We want to do everything possible to minimize the transmission of the virus via shared or commonly touched objects, so the following modifications have been made:

- **Doors** - To minimize the transmission of the virus, our two main entrance doors will either be propped open or held open by volunteers to allow entrance and exit without the need to touch handles. Doors into the sanctuary will also remain open.
- **Printed Items** – We are suspending the handing out and use of printed worship bulletins, as well as other communication pieces (NEUs, Prayer Focus). We encourage the church family to sign up for email distribution of various weekly communication, as well as connecting with the church on social media.
- **Hymn Books, Bibles, and Connection Cards** – These items will no longer be available in the pew racks. We encourage the church family to bring personal Bibles or use a Bible app on a smart phone. Lyrics to all songs and scripture passages will be displayed on the front screens.

- **Offering** – Until further notice, offering plates will not be passed through the pews during the service. Offering boxes in the Sanctuary lobby will be available to drop off your tithes and offering as you enter and exit the Sanctuary (or overflow area). Giving envelopes will be available on the side of the offering boxes. We are grateful for your continued generosity to Pearce and ask that you consider or continue giving electronically.

**Attendance for Contact Tracing** – In the event of an exposure to COVID-19, the health department requires contact tracing information. Therefore, those planning on attending a weekend service will need to RSVP each week using our online system or by calling the church. Attendance will be verified once a person/family has arrived for a service.

**Congregational Singing** – Currently, singing is considered a high-risk activity by health authorities. While we understand singing is a significant part of worship for many, even with masks worn, the risk is considered too high, especially in a closed system (room). Therefore, leadership has determined to suspend congregational singing until further notice. The worship team will continue to sing and provide worship music while the congregation is encouraged to reflect and mediate. This decision will be re-evaluated on a regular basis as guidelines change.

**Communion** – Until further notice, the sacrament of Communion, typically served at Pearce on the 1<sup>st</sup> weekend of the month, will be suspended until it is deemed safe enough to partake together with minimal risk. This will be re-evaluated monthly as guidelines change.

**Seating** – Sanctuary pews will be roped off to allow for at least 6ft distancing between families. Aisles will be designated either as “in” or “out”. As you enter the Sanctuary, volunteers will guide families to pews filling in from front to back. Families are asked to enter together so seating can be done as a group. All of this will reduce potential social distancing issues. At dismissal, families will be dismissed starting from the back and working to the front of the Sanctuary. We ask all to follow the instructions of volunteers and stay in their pew as much as possible.

**Overflow Area** – Parmerter Chapel has been prepared to serve as an overflow area once the Sanctuary reaches capacity. The service will be live-streamed into this area and chairs will be set up to allow for appropriate social distancing. Like the Sanctuary, seating will commence from the front to the back. To exit from overflow area, people will be directed out the front of the chapel and exit through Door #15 (near the preschool playground).

## Pearce Kids Ministry

It is very challenging to maintain proper physical distancing and effectively minister to the needs of children, infant through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, we will implement the following changes to our Kids Ministry until further notice:

- Nursery care will not be offered.
- Sunday morning Kids Equip classes (Sunday School) will be suspended.

- Kids are welcome in worship services and families are encouraged to bring quiet activity items for any child who may need help staying focused during the service.
- We will monitor governing guidelines on a weekly basis and re-evaluate how to resume Kids Ministry and begin adding activities as soon as possible.

## Pearce Teen Ministry

Students in middle and high school are more capable of understanding social distancing and guidelines to keep them safe. We will implement the following changes to our Teen Ministry until further notice:

- Outdoor summer activities at local parks and backyards have been planned. Teens are to arrange their own ride to and from a location and are to wear a mask. 6ft social distancing will be maintained at all times and any food items will be handled with proper personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, etc.).
- Sunday morning Teen equip classes will be suspended.
- Teens are welcome to participate in worship services, but will not be permitted to roam the building unsupervised.
- We will monitor governing guidelines on a weekly basis and re-evaluate how to resume Teen Ministry and begin adding activities as soon as possible.

## Pearce 4 Kids

Pearce 4 Kids is under the authority of the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and has an extensive plan approved by them. Their specific plan can be requested by calling the church office.

## Notification/Communication of Potential COVID Exposure

In the event of a positive COVID-19 test from a Pearce Church or Pearce 4 Kids attendee, volunteer, or staff member, the following will occur:

- The facility will close for at least 24-48 hours so areas can be thoroughly sanitized.
- The appropriate local and state health officials will be notified and we will cooperate with contact tracing efforts.
- All staff will be notified of closure of building due to COVID-19 case.
- All potential contacts, such as staff, attendees, or visitors who had close contact with the individual will be notified of potential exposure, while maintaining confidentiality required by state and federal law and regulations.
- Those with potential exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 will be informed to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.
  - Should any potential exposure happen and has not yet been confirmed as a positive COVID-19 test, staff is required to quarantine until a diagnosis is confirmed.
  - If you receive a positive COVID-19 diagnosis and have been in the church facility up to 14 days prior to your diagnosis, please notify the church office.

## FAQ's

- **When will the Saturday Service be reinstated?**

We value the Saturday Service and all those who attend. Our hope is to resume the Saturday Service sometime after Labor Day.
- **Will coffee and food be served in the main lobby on Sunday mornings?**

All coffee and food service offered on Sunday mornings (and Saturday evenings when that service resumes) will be suspended until further notice. This will be reviewed often in accordance with NY state and CDC guidelines.
- **When can we start singing in worship services?**

It is hard to determine when singing can resume within the Sanctuary. We encourage our church family to worship through song at other times that allows for personal safety (traveling in a car, while at home, Worship Wednesday live on Facebook, etc.) This decision will be re-evaluated on a regular basis as guidelines change.
- **Is the church office open?**

The church office is open during normal business hours. We ask that people refrain from coming into the building as much as possible, and encourage contacting church personnel by telephone or email. If there is a need to come into the building, a mask will be required.
- **When can other ministries start back in the facility?**

Staff is working on when and how other ministries of Pearce will be able to re-enter the building. Currently, we are looking at a phased restart in the Fall, with the understanding that there will be guidelines limiting group size, etc. We cannot guarantee all groups the same access they were used to as staff needs to consider sanitation/cleaning needs and space sharing with P4K.
- **Can I access the church library?**

Because our church library is located within the Pearce 4 Kids area, it will remain closed until further notice. As with other areas, this will be re-evaluated as guidelines change.
- **Can I still donate food, clothing, etc.?**

Food donations will be accepted in the main lobby when the building is open. Other item donations (clothing, furniture, books) are on hold until further notice.
- **How is Pearce planning for funerals/memorials and weddings?**
  - **Funerals/Memorials** - It is our desire to honor and celebrate the lives of loved ones who have died. Staff will work with families to schedule and plan services that will fit within current guidelines. At this time, a food element (luncheon or reception) is likely not possible within the facility as guests would need to remove their masks to partake of any food/beverage and thus increase risk of exposure.

- Weddings – It is our hope that future weddings will not have to worry about current restrictions and guidelines. Weddings can be scheduled and staff will proceed with plans, but the couple and their families will need to keep in mind that guidelines and/or restrictions at the time of their wedding date will need to be followed.
- In either of these types of services, if people attending are from states currently on the travel advisory list from NY State Governor’s office, they must observe the 14-day quarantine before they are allowed to enter the facility.
- We will continually re-evaluate guidelines in these areas.

## COVID 19 Warning and Waiver of Liability

Pearce Church has taken enhanced health and safety measures—for you, other guests, and both paid and volunteer staff. You must follow all posted instructions while attending in-person gatherings at Pearce Church and use common wisdom as prescribed by the state of New York and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any public place where people are present. COVID-19 is an extremely contagious disease that can lead to severe illness and death. According to the CDC, senior citizens and guests with underlying medical conditions are especially vulnerable. Exposure to COVID-19 may be from a person who is completely asymptomatic.

By attending in-person gatherings at Pearce Church you voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19 and waive any liability for exposure to or contraction of COVID-19 while in attendance.

Together, let us help keep each other healthy.

## References/Resources

- NY Forward website: [www.forward.ny.gov](http://www.forward.ny.gov)
- NY Guidelines for religious and funeral services: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/ReligiousandFuneralServicesSummaryGuidance.pdf>
- Executive orders from NY Governor: [www.governor.ny.gov/executiveorders](http://www.governor.ny.gov/executiveorders)
- CDC Communities of Faith guidelines: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html)
- Free Methodist Church USA: [www.fmcusa.org/covid19](http://www.fmcusa.org/covid19)
- Genesis Conference FMC: [www.genesisfmc.com/2020/05/27/covid-19-guidelines-5262020/](http://www.genesisfmc.com/2020/05/27/covid-19-guidelines-5262020/)