

“Phase 3” Protocols go into effect April 1

The FPC “COVID Commission,” after weighing our recent attendance and mask-wearing statistics, recent data from the Mississippi State Department of Health, opinions from local health care providers, Executive Order 1549 from Governor Reeves, and informal feedback from church members regarding vaccinations, is **moving FPC into “Phase 3” protocols, effective April 1.** Remember that there were 3 phases to our plan to re-gather the congregation:

Phase 1: In-person worship with maximum precautions (effective May 31, 2020)

Phase 2: In-person worship with small groups with maximum precautions (effective July 19, 2020)

Phase 3: In-person worship with small groups and childcare with reduced precautions (effective April 1, 2021).

Here is what the move to “Phase 3” means for us now as a congregation:

ALL GATHERINGS:

- We **strongly encourage you to wear a mask/face covering when you enter and walk around the building and during congregational singing.** You may remove your mask once you are seated, unless the class or group you are attending is “mask-required.”
- Please **wash your hands frequently** and use the **hand-sanitizer** provided throughout the facility.
- We may continue to use non-contact forehead thermometers to provide **quick-check temperatures** of arriving attendees who want to be checked or who may appear to be ill.

WORSHIP GATHERINGS:

- We are increasing the **sanctuary seating capacity** incrementally:
 - We have removed the ropes from the center seating section and are asking attendees in that section to spread out more. We hope this will provide more seating (especially if the first folks to sit in a pew are willing to move toward the middle) while still allowing for good social distancing.
 - We will continue for a while to keep every other pew on the side sections roped for attendees who prefer the extra distance.
 - We have added more folding chairs to the back of the room.
- We have returned the **pew Bibles** and **hymnals** to the pew racks.
- We will once again have **congregational singing** that is spread throughout the order of service rather than singing all the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs at the end of the service. The **choir** may sit in the choir loft to assist in leading congregational singing.
- We will continue for a while to **collect offerings** via the boxes/online/mail-in/drop-off only.
- We will resume passing the elements of the **Lord’s Supper** using the traditional silver trays. However, we will continue to use the sealed all-in-one units for the elements for a while. Elders participating in distribution of the elements will wear mask/face coverings during that portion of the service.
- We will resume **choir rehearsals and performances.**
- We will resume **evening worship** on **Sunday, April 18.**

FELLOWSHIP, MINISTRY, AND MEAL GATHERINGS:

- Beginning **May 2**, we will have **E-groups** on the **1st and 3rd Sundays** of the month in the 5:00-6:30 p.m. time slots and evening worship on the **2nd and 4th Sundays** of each month. E-groups may meet at the church facility if they prefer. We understand that members of some E-groups may not feel ready to resume meetings, and we encourage E-groups to give attention to how they can serve those who are not yet ready to resume meeting together.
- We will resume **weekly Wednesday night suppers**, effective **April 7**, provided that seating is spaced out. We will also resume other church-kitchen prepared or catered meals. “Potluck”-style meals continue to be suspended until further notice.
- We encourage FPC members to worship, teach, nurture, and reach through **one-on-one ministry and small group meetings and events (women’s and men’s ministry, discipleship and training groups, Sunday School)**. General masking and social-distancing policies apply to these events and are especially important if non-vaccinated attendees are present.