



## TWP Priorities during COVID-19 (9.4)

Updated November 2021

**INTRODUCTION:** Since March of 2020, The Worship Place has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have developed the following operational priorities to guide our decision-making processes. We have chosen to operate in love and wisdom, not fear. We plan to overcome this current COVID-19 crisis during which we will demonstrate God's love and care to our church family and the surrounding community.

1. **Mission:** Our highest priority is the salvation of souls. While life is a precious gift, life is more than the body. After this life, each one of us must face eternity with or without God. The mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, calling all people to faith in Jesus Christ and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

2. **Religious Freedom:** By Executive Order, the Governor of Texas has defined essential services to include "religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship." The First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article I of the Texas Constitution protect the right of Texans to worship and freely exercise their religion according to the dictates of their own consciences. In addition, the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act ("RFRA") provides additional protections to faith communities, and government must ensure that it complies with RFRA when it acts, even during a disaster.

On March 2, 2021, Governor Greg Abbott issued an Executive Order (GA-34) lifting the mask mandate in Texas and increasing capacity of all businesses and facilities in the state to 100 percent.

On November 2, 2021, Texas Proposition 3, Prohibition on Limiting Religious Services or Organizations Amendment was approved by Texans as a legislatively referred constitutional amendment. The amendment to the state constitution prohibits the state or any political subdivision from enacting a law, rule, order, or proclamation that limits religious services or organizations.

We value our religious freedom and choose to act responsibly with love for our members and neighbors during this COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Health and Safety: In love for our members and neighbors, we have acted to slow the spread of the coronavirus. On March 16, 2020 TWP closed all public worship services and ministry activities at both campuses and shifted from public worship services to online virtual worship services only on March 22, 2020. Church offices were closed on March 25, 2020 and the staff started working remotely. The staff returned to working onsite on May 4, 2020. On June 15, 2020 we re-opened both campuses for small group meetings. TWP published a social safety handbook. All were encouraged to wear masks when entering and exiting the building, and when the 6-ft. social distance cannot be maintained.

Since March 2021, vaccinations for the prevention of COVID-19 have been available to the public. The Worship Place will not require COVID-19 vaccinations for public gatherings. Every individual is unique; some have special medical concerns. Some can be vaccinated; others cannot be vaccinated. We urge you to act responsibly and make choices which are best for your personal health, as well as the health and safety of your friends, family, and neighbors.

4. Protocol for Notification: If you or someone in your ministry tests positive for COVID-19, it is the responsibility of the person who tested positive to notify others in the group who may have been exposed to them in the last 5-7 days. If the person who tested positive is unable to contact exposed members (i.e., because they are in the hospital), it is the responsibility of the team leader to assist with the notification process. Please remember to protect the identity of the person who tested positive, as much as possible. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) provides individual protections and does not allow The Worship Place to name persons who have tested positive for coronavirus.

5. Re-opened for In-person Worship: We reopened for in-person worship on Sunday, August 23, 2020. We are making every effort to conduct worship services in accordance with guidance from the Office of the Governor of Texas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"), and local authorities in order to create a safe environment for public gatherings.

In April 2021, we entered in an Interim Period of Public Health. In other words, it's getting better, but it's not over yet. Even though Texas has no mask mandate, and some TWP members have received COVID vaccinations, we are still wearing masks and social distancing during our worship services on Sundays.

On April 30, 2021, the Board of Trustees at TWP announced a plan to expand our seating capacity and make masks optional:

On May 13, 2021, TWP Board of Trustees announced that masks are optional at both campuses for all events and services, effective Sunday, May 16, 2021.

Beginning Sunday, May 16, 2021 our sanctuary seating at both campuses returned to 100% capacity.

6. Virtual Ministry: We continue to provide online virtual worship services. Bible studies, Connection Groups, special events, leadership meetings, committee meetings, and Pastoral Updates have been added to our menu of online services.

We want to emphasize that you do not have to attend in-person worship services. We respect your individual freedom to choose what is best for you. You are free to participate in-person or virtually online.

7. Individual Freedom & Responsibility: If you choose to attend and participate in services and activities at our facilities, please act responsibly and consider the safety of others. If you are sick, please stay home. If your immune system is compromised, please stay home. If you have an underlying at-risk health condition, please stay home and watch the services online. Join us when all is well.

Finally, we ask that you do all things in love. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. We hope to see you soon.

Maury Millican, Interim Senior Pastor

Janie Peak, Business Administrator



## **Social Safety Guidelines**

### **Members/Visitors/Vendors/Contractors:**

1. Check-in at the Welcome Center.
2. If you have pre-existing conditions that compromise your health, please return home.
3. If you have persistent coughing, sneezing, or a fever, please return home.
4. Please maintain the 6-ft. rule for safe distancing. (Suspended)
5. Please wear a mask if the 6-ft. rule is compromised. Masks are available at the Welcome Center Desk. (Suspended)
6. Please use hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes/tissues located throughout both facilities. Please wipe-down the surface areas you used before you leave. (Recommended)
7. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow, and immediately go and wash your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as much as possible.
8. Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer.

### **Screening Questions (Suspended)**

1. Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?
2. In the past 14 days, have you traveled out of the country?
3. In the past 14 days, have you experienced a cough, shortness of breath, or any flu-like symptoms?
4. Have you recently lost your sense of smell?
5. Are you willing to wear a mask and gloves while at our location?

## **Guidelines for In-person Small Group Meetings**

Recurring meetings previously scheduled on the master calendar began to meet once again starting June 15, 2020. As these meetings resume, your health and safety are our primary concern. Ministry Leaders should contact Karen Quillen one week in advance of meeting time and provide the number of attendees that will be present. If any of your team will need to join a meeting with Zoom, please advise when you contact Karen. This allows for scheduling each group in the most appropriately sized meeting room with the needs requested. As you contact your members of a meeting time and location, please remind them to bring their masks.

Meeting rooms will be set up to conform to safety and health guidelines. Please do not reset any of the furniture, equipment, tables or chairs. If there are any needs the day of the meeting please go to the Welcome Center Desk for assistance. Each room will have sanitizing wipes for wiping tables and chair frameworks after your meeting. We appreciate your assistance in following these steps to make the rooms safe and healthy for everyone.

Ministry leaders will keep a log of all attendees at each meeting and provide that to the Welcome Center desk after each meeting. These logs will be used should any follow-up communication be needed.

Ministry leaders may arrive 20 minutes prior to their meeting for set up and preparation. Please depart the building promptly at the end of your meeting to allow transition time for the next meeting.

Signs are posted on the outer doors to encourage a COVID-19 self-check before entering the building. Hand sanitizer is available upon entering and exiting the church facilities. To minimize traffic flow in and out of the office suite, please schedule an appointment if you would like to meet with a pastor or staff member. For everyone's safety, checking in at the Welcome Desk upon entering the building will be required.

Any new requests for meeting spaces need to be made a minimum of one week in advance of the meeting date. Information needed will be the duration of the meeting, number of attendees and any technical support needed. Requests after this time frame may not be able to be scheduled.

We will depend on our ministry leaders to ensure your group members follow these guidelines to keep us all healthy and safe. Thank you for your cooperation!