



**INDEPENDENT  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT:  
A GUIDE TO RE-OPENING THE CHURCH**

**AUGUST 17, 2020**



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## OVERVIEW

At Independent Presbyterian Church, we believe God calls us to be a Christian community, actively engaged in transforming lives through our living faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian community by its very nature is a very close community—we enjoy each other's company and presence by spending time together in fellowship, worship and by the breaking of bread. This year has been really challenging for both staff and lay people alike on how to actively engage in transforming lives while keeping everyone safe. This document will provide information about a phased approach to return to in-person gatherings, sources used by the H&P Reopening Task Force for guidance, facility guidelines and frequently asked questions.

When the time is appropriate to return to the church campus for in-person worship and small groups gathering, it must be done in a manner that is measured, focused and safe.

- IPC will reopen in a measured way. We will take into consideration the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control, the Alabama Department of Health, the Jefferson County Department of Health, state and local leaders and agencies. We must re-open in a way that keeps those that are more vulnerable safe from the potential harm of the virus.

- IPC will reopen in a focused way. As we remain focused on actively engaging in transforming lives through Jesus Christ, we will remain focused on the physical, spiritual and emotional well-being of our congregation and our guests.

- IPC will reopen in a safe way. We will determine which priorities of the church need to happen immediately and which ones will be added later. Our goal is to resume activities as soon as it is safe to do so.

Our first priority when it comes to re-opening the church has always been and will continue to be the health and safety of our members and visitors. For that reason, we have not set a date to return, rather our task force has focused on looking at what the data is telling us. A downward trend in active cases of COVID-19 would give more assurance to the task force that the group was moving in the right direction by re-opening the church.



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## DATA

### PRIMARY SOURCE OF GUIDANCE & DATA

- Center for Disease Control (CDC) [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [www.epa.gov/coronavirus](http://www.epa.gov/coronavirus)
- Alabama Department of Public Health [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19)
- Jefferson County Department of Health <https://jcdh.org/>
- Jefferson County EMA [www.jeffcoema.org/covid-19](http://www.jeffcoema.org/covid-19)
- City of Birmingham—Mayor’s office [www.birminghamal.gov/about/mayors-office/](http://www.birminghamal.gov/about/mayors-office/)
- Presbyterian Church—USA [www.pcusa.org/covid19](http://www.pcusa.org/covid19)

### HOUSE & PROPERTIES TASK FORCE

- Mike Graham | Chair, House & Properties
- Alan Deer | Session, House & Properties
- Dr. Susan Eiland | Lay Leader
- Dr. Steve Hunt | Lay Leader, Clerk of Session
- Paul Leaver | Lay Leader, House & Properties
- Julie Rediker | Lay Leader, IPC Day School Committee
- Dr. Sean Vanlandingham | Lay Leader
- Rev. Lucy Turner | Staff, IPC Executive Assoc. Pastor, Director of Congregational Care
- Bill McKelvey | Staff, IPC Director of Operations & Administration
- Sandra Putnam | Staff, IPC Administrative Assistant



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### CONGREGATIONAL RE-OPENING SURVEY

From the recent survey, we can make some observations about the congregation's desire to return to in-person worship and small group gatherings. One observation is that the majority of people value safety over risk and also that they would cooperate with reasonable guidelines to keep themselves and others safe. However, in a group size of 1,800 people, there are varying degrees of risk tolerance that people are willing to accept. The survey also highlights that the majority of people surveyed are not ready to return to in-person gatherings and worship. The age demographics help us to determine that the majority of those desiring to attend small groups/ Sunday School classes and also attend in-person worship at the first opportunity are in a high risk category. At this point in time, the House & Properties Task Force feels it is necessary to continue to worship online until a safer margin exists.

The team is also working on a phased approach to returning to in-person worship as well as small group gatherings. When the appropriate time comes to return to the church campus, there will be a conscious effort to have dual offerings for those who want to wait a little longer before returning in person. The next report from the team should be available in the near future along with some FAQs on what to expect when returning to the church campus. Thank you for taking time to share valuable information in the church wide survey, and be on the lookout for the next report.

Stay safe,  
House & Properties Task Force

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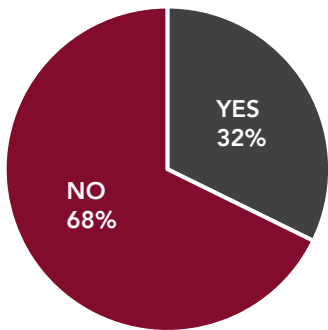
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DATA

The House & Properties Task Force sent an electronic survey to all IPC members and a paper survey to our members who are 70 years old and older in June. The task force is grateful to everyone who provided their opinions. As of July 27, we received nearly 500 responses online and by mail and will be using the feedback in helping to make decisions about safe in-person worship and other gatherings.

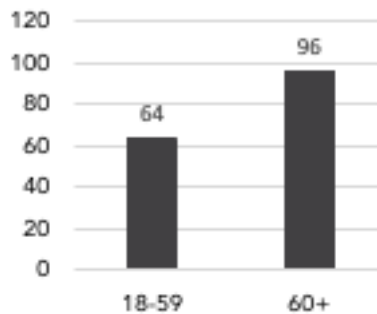
QUESTION 1

If small groups and Sunday School classes are allowed to meet in the church building prior to the time Sunday in-person worship is allowed, would you attend?



ANSWER	RESPONSES
Yes	160 (32%)
No	336 (68%)

"YES" REPONSES BY AGE GROUP

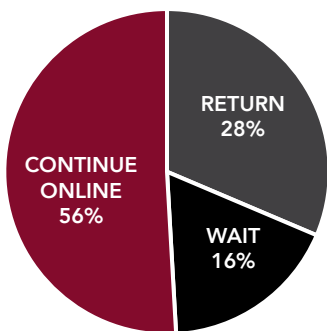


AGE	RESPONSES
18-59	64 (40%)
60+	96 (60%)

**Of 496 total responses, 87% would not attend or are in a High Risk Group. 13% would attend and are not in a High Risk Group.**

QUESTION 2

When the first date is announced for in-person worship in the sanctuary, recognizing that worship will not immediately include singing, passing of the Peace, etc., we will...



ANSWER	RESPONSES
Return at the first opportunity	140 (28%)
Wait several weeks before attending	79 (16%)
Continue online worship until we feel it's safe to return	277 (56%)

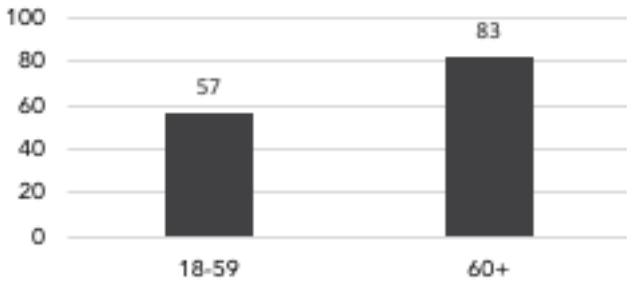


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DATA CONT.

QUESTION 2 CONT.

"RETURN AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY" RESPONSES BY AGE GROUP



AGE	RESPONSES
18-59	57 (40%)
60+	83 (60%)

BREAKDOWN OF OTHER RESPONSES

WAIT A FEW WEEKS

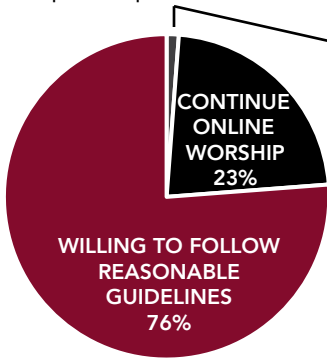
AGE	RESPONSES
18-59	36 (46%)
60+	43 (54%)

CONTINUE ONLINE WORSHIP

AGE	RESPONSES
18-59	79 (29%)
60+	198 (71%)

QUESTION 3

When the church returns to in-person worship, would you be willing to follow protective guidelines such as wearing masks, sitting six feet from the nearest person and/or family, and/or follow one-way entrance and exit paths put in place for the service?

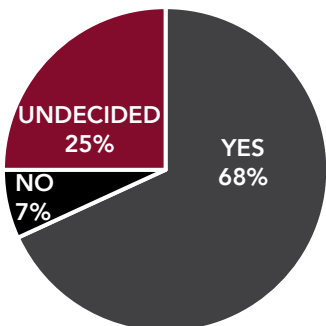


RATHER WORSHIP WITHOUT PROTECTIVE GUIDELINES  
1%

ANSWER	RESPONSES
Would rather worship without any protective guidelines	6 (1%)
Will continue to worship online until these protective measures are no longer necessary	112 (23%)
Willing to follow any reasonable guidelines that are put in place	378 (76%)

QUESTION 4

Would you be willing to attend a worship service at a different time than you typically attend to allow people to spread out so that proper social distancing is maintained?



ANSWER	RESPONSES
Yes	338 (68%)
No	34 (7%)
Undecided	124 (25%)

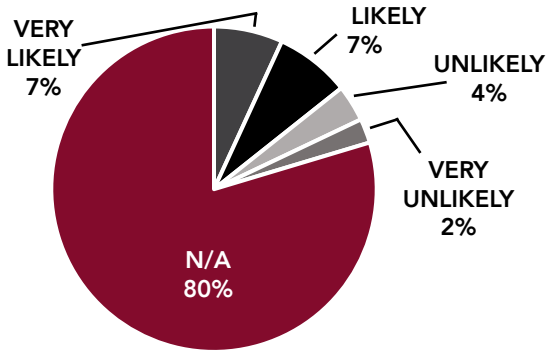


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DATA CONT.

QUESTION 5

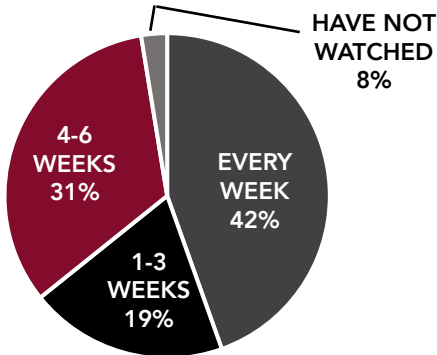
If you have children, how likely is it that you would attend as a family without nursery, children's classes or Sunday morning youth activities? All children and youth would be with their families during worship services.



ANSWER	RESPONSES
Very likely	34 (7%)
Likely	37 (7%)
Unlikely	18 (4%)
Very unlikely	12 (2%)
N/A	395 (80%)

QUESTION 6

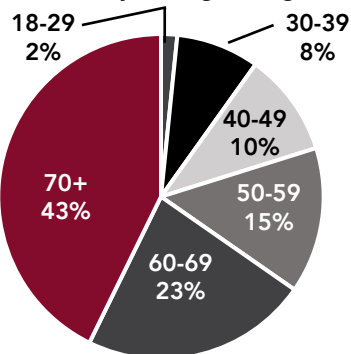
How often have you watched the worship services online since Sunday, March 15?



ANSWER	RESPONSES
Every week	208 (42%)
1-3 weeks	92 (19%)
4-6 weeks	155 (31%)
I have not watched worship	41 (8%)

QUESTION 7

What is your age range?



ANSWER	RESPONSES
18- 29	8 (2%)
30-39	41 (8%)
40-49	51 (10%)
50-59	72 (15%)
60-69	112 (23%)
70+	212 (43%)





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## TIMELINE

### PHASE 1

- Continued suspension of in-person group services in the sanctuary.
- Limited use of facilities for members and guests.
- Staff working remotely, with Program Staff working at the church offices Tuesday through Thursday.
- Church worship services are limited to outdoors, and up to 75 people depending on location, an advanced reservation is required and streaming online when capable.
- No childcare will be offered during this phase. Groups meet primarily online via Zoom.
- Funerals, baptisms, prayer services and weddings in the Sanctuary are limited to 50 people.
- On-site small group gatherings of 25 or less are allowed by advanced reservation only, masks and 6' social distancing are required, but all groups are highly encouraged to meet by Zoom.
- The Kitchen staff prepares food for Community Ministries and Congregational Care, and takeout for church members, guests and staff on a limited basis.
- Housekeeping staff to return full time when Day School starts.
- Admins will start back to answer phones on a schedule TBD.
- Masks are required throughout church, with the exception of staff being seated at one's desk with no visitors in the office.
- Breakroom limited to 2 people at a time.
- Counseling will be allowed on-site following 6' social distancing, required masks and cleaning between clients.

- The church remains "closed" to visitors.

### CURRENT STATUS/PHASE 2

This phase begins with a significant decline in COVID-19 by measuring a variety of relevant local metrics including the 14 day moving average of new cases for Jefferson and Shelby Counties ("Cases"), a consistent supply of tests are accessible, and the cleaning supplies needed are readily available. **All of the measures in prior phase(s) remain in place with the exception of the following changes:**

- Staff will return to work their regular schedules, depending on programming needs.
- On-site small group gatherings of 50 or less are recommended along with required masks and social distancing.
- Specified rooms are available for meetings.
- November Organ Recital Series in the Sanctuary is limited to 50 people.

### PHASE 3

This phase begins with a significant decline in COVID-19 by measuring a variety of relevant local metrics, including the 14 day moving average of new cases for Jefferson and Shelby Counties ("Cases"), a consistent supply of tests are accessible, and the cleaning supplies needed are readily available. **All of the measures in prior phase(s) remain in place with the exception of the following changes:**

- Church worship services are allowed in the sanctuary during this phase, limited to 100 people, an advanced reservation is required, streaming online when capable with required masks and social distancing.
- Childcare will be considered in this phase with a 7 days notice.
- Specified rooms are available for meetings for smaller groups.
- Funerals, baptisms, prayer services



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and weddings in sanctuary, limited to 100 people.

- Services will open in the sanctuary, limited to 100 people.
- Funerals, baptisms, weddings, prayer services and November Organ Recital Series in Sanctuary, limited to 100 people.

#### PHASE 4

This phase begins with a significant decline in COVID-19 by measuring a variety of relevant local metrics, including the 14 day moving average of new cases for Jefferson and Shelby Counties (“Cases”), a consistent supply of tests are accessible, and the cleaning supplies needed are readily available. **All of the measures in prior phase(s) remain in place with the exception of the following changes:**

- Church worship services are allowed in the sanctuary during this phase, limited to 180 people, an advanced reservation is required, streaming online when capable with required masks and social distancing.
- Funerals, baptisms, weddings, prayer services and November Organ Recital Series in Sanctuary, limited to 180 people.

#### PHASE 5

Our new normal with fewer restrictions as defined by IPC, Governmental and medical authorities.

**In all cases, the decision to move from one phase to another, either up or down, will be subject to the Task Force’s subjective opinion, based on multiple factors including the scientific data, advice from experts, status of peer churches, and our own experiences. Because of the fluid nature of state and local requirements and recommendations relating to COVID-19, this document is subject to update and change without notice. Any exception to the foregoing guidelines must be approved in advance by the church. Rooms or areas of the church available for meetings or gathering and any limitations on the number of attendees will be determined by church facilities management in consultation with the appropriate church oversight committee.**



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## GUIDELINES

### CHURCH BUILDINGS OR FACILITIES

*Updated September 17, 2020*

The following are the current general guidelines for members and guests entering or using Independent Presbyterian Church buildings or facilities. These general guidelines may be supplemented for other specific events or uses—for example, weddings and funerals—or for specific church properties. All guidelines are intended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission.

At this time, using the church buildings in person is limited to meetings of 25 or less with 6' social distancing in place. Please make every effort to use online meeting sites (ex. Zoom) or conference calls when possible. Please ensure that every member of your group is comfortable meeting in person and/or has access to the meeting via telephone or online sites.

1. Designated Rooms or Areas: Use of church facilities for meetings or other gatherings may be limited to designated rooms or outdoor areas in order to facilitate social distancing. At this time, the following room will be made available by reservation only:

• Great Hall 1	Limit – 12	A/V Available
• Great Hall 2	Limit - 6	A/V Available
• Rooms 305-306	Limit – 25	A/V Available
• Garage	Limit - 22	A/V Available
• Loft in Highland Hall	Limit- 20 with no tables	A/V Available
• Patio	Limit - 25	A/V Available
• Highland Hall Assembly	Limit- 50	A/V Available
• Sanctuary	Limit- 50	A/V Available

2. Limited Number of Attendees: The number of attendees may be limited based on the rooms or areas within or outside the church to be utilized in order to facilitate social distancing. The maximum number of attendees is 25.

3. Requirements for Arriving Members and Guests:

a. Social Distancing: All members and guests must maintain a consistent six-foot distance between persons.

b. Masks: All members and guests over the age of two (2) must wear masks while on church property.

c. Food and Beverage: No outside food is allowed. People may bring a single-size beverage for personal consumption.

d. Obligations Prior to Arrival: All members and guests are expected to exercise precautions prior to arrival to reduce the risk of virus transmission. These precautions include, among other things, the following:

- asking themselves the following questions before arriving at the church:
  - Have I been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
  - Am I experiencing a cough, shortness of breath or sore throat?



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- Have I experienced a loss of taste or smell?
- Have I had a fever in the last 24 hours?
- Have I traveled internationally within the past 14 days?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “yes,” the member or guest should not come to the church.

Prior to coming to the church, staff, members and guests can help

- if possible, taking their own temperatures before leaving home, which should not exceed 100.4 degrees (Fahrenheit).
- washing their hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds before leaving home;
- using the restroom before leaving home as church restrooms may be limited or not available for use; and
- using personal hand sanitizer upon arrival.

Attendance of people 65 or older or others especially at risk is discouraged.

e. Additional Obligations upon Arrival: Use hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes as may be made available within the church, and wash hands with warm water and soap when using available church restrooms.

f. Acknowledgement of Exposure Risk: All members and guests understand and acknowledge that COVID-19 is a public health risk that can result in serious illness or death and exposure can occur despite precautions taken. All members and guests using or entering church property or facilities voluntarily assume all risk of exposure.

4. Additional Requests or Instructions of Clergy or Church Staff: All members and guests are expected to follow any additional requests or instructions made by the clergy or church staff.

Because of the fluid nature of state and local requirements and recommendations relating to COVID-19, this document is subject to update and change without notice. Any exception to the foregoing guidelines must be approved in advance by the church. Rooms or areas of the church available for meetings or gathering and any limitations on the number of attendees will be determined by church facilities management in consultation with the appropriate church oversight committee.



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## GUIDELINES

### WEDDING, FUNERAL, PRAYER AND BAPTISM SERVICES

*Updated August 26, 2020*

The following are the current guidelines for guests and other family members attending wedding, funeral or baptism services at Independent Presbyterian Church.

1. Number of Guests: 50 or fewer guests will be allowed in the sanctuary for a wedding, funeral or baptism service. If an event is held outdoors, the maximum number allowed will be determined by location:

- On grass area behind Highland Hall – 75 (no indoor facilities available in the case of rain)
- On the green field at the Children’s Fresh Air Farm (CFAF) in Hoover – 50
- Under the covered pavilion at the Children’s Fresh Air Farm in Hoover – 50
- In the courtyard area at IPC between the Sanctuary and Chapel - 50
- Patio at Highland Hall - 25

2. Requirements for Guests:

a. Social Distancing:

- i. All guests must maintain a consistent six-foot distance between persons from different households.
- ii. No seating is allowed in the first pew of the sanctuary, which should remain vacant at all times.
- iii. All guests must sit spaced out at least every other pew with at least two vacant seats between guests of different households on the same pew.

b. Masks: All guests over the age of two (2) must wear masks while inside the sanctuary (with the exception of a bride/groom during a wedding ceremony or parents/child in a baptism ceremony).

c. Singing: While a soloist may be allowed, no congregational or guest singing is permitted due to the increased risk of transmission presented.

d. Obligations of Guests Prior to Arrival: All guests are expected to exercise precautions prior to arrival to reduce the risk of virus transmission. These precautions include, among other things, the following:

- i. taking their own temperatures before leaving home, which should not exceed 100.4 degrees (Fahrenheit).
- ii. washing their hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds before leaving home;
- iii. using the restroom before leaving home as church restrooms may not be available for use; and
- iv. using personal hand sanitizer upon arrival.

Attendance of people 65 or older or others especially at risk is discouraged. Anyone who has been sick or living with anyone who has experienced symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat or other known symptoms) should NOT attend the service.

e. Acknowledgement of Exposure Risk: All guests understand and acknowledge that COVID-19 is a public health risk that can result in serious illness or death and exposure can occur despite precautions taken. All guests and other persons attending or participating in a service voluntarily assume all risk of exposure.



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6. Nursery: The church nursery will not be available for use. Guests with young children should make childcare arrangements outside of the church or plan to bring the children to the service. Children present at the service will be included in the guest limitation number above.
7. Sign-in Registry: Sign-in books are not permitted because the pen is a frequently touched item.
8. Additional Requests or Instructions of Clergy or Church Staff: All guests and other persons participating in the service are expected to follow any additional requests or instructions made by the clergy or church staff.
9. Baptisms: Parents will hold the child at all times. Masks are not required for the parents, child or minister.

Because of the fluid nature of state and local requirements and recommendations relating to COVID-19, this document is subject to update and change without notice. Any exception to the foregoing guidelines must be approved in advance by the church. Rooms or areas of the church available for meetings or gathering and any limitations on the number of attendees will be determined by church facilities management in consultation with the appropriate church oversight committee.



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## FAQ

### **Why aren't we reopening and resuming worship and all small group gatherings? Other churches are doing it.**

Independent Presbyterian Church cares deeply for our congregation and for our community as well. The H&P Task Force has prioritized reopening the church in a measured, focused and safe manner so as to not do any harm to those we serve.

### **Will masks be required when we return to the church campus? What about social distancing**

The best guidance available today advises that maintaining six feet of social distancing for those outside of your household, washing your hands with warm soapy water and wearing masks are the easiest ways to slow and prevent contracting or transmitting Covid-19. Wearing a mask not only protects you, but also those around you. For these reasons, anyone entering the church campus will be required to wear a mask for work, worship, or any small group gatherings, etc.

We know you are eager to see your church family, but not everyone is ready for a handshake or a hug. We want to help create an environment that is comfortable for the majority, so that means limiting personal contact as much as possible for the time being. By being courteous, even if we do not agree, we can show that our love for one another is more than just a handshake or a hug.

### **How many people will be allowed into the Sanctuary when we return for worship? Are reservations required?**

The H&P Task Force and the church staff will continue to review recommendations from the CDC, other churches and government agencies to determine the appropriate capacity in worship. As we move toward resuming in-person worship, detailed information will be sent out to help facilitate the process, including

### **What is IPC doing to keep the church facilities clean?**

During this time while the building is closed, our housekeeping and facilities staff are working tirelessly to clean and sanitize the building, perform preventative maintenance on all equipment, and are ensuring that everything is performing at optimal levels. All HVAC systems have been serviced and filters replaced, and fresh air intake has been adjusted to introduce as much outside air as possible. We will ensure continuous air circulation while the building is occupied. We are following CDC recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Hand sanitizer will be available, and high contact points will be thoroughly sanitized before, during, and after each worship service or gathering in the building.

While we are doing everything we can to keep things clean, however we know that it is up to each individual to choose whether it is in their best interest to attend services or events and that you do so at your own risk.

### **Is the church building open? Can I drop off my pledge check in person?**

For the time being, the church building will remain closed until deemed safe to reopen. We encourage you to mail in your tithes and offerings by mail or give online using our safe and secure giving link at <https://ipc-usa.org/give/>

If you need to deliver your gift in person, please contact a staff member for assistance.

While the building is closed, our church family continues to do important mission work in our community and your continued financial support is vital to these ongoing works and we thank you for your faithful giving.



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## FAQ CONT.

### **I have more questions. How do I contact a staff member?**

IPC church staff members are here to help in any way we can during this time. You can reach any staff member by email or by calling them directly. For a listing of our staff and their contact information visit <https://ipc-usa.org/welcome/meet-our-pastors-leadership/>

Our receptionist also distributes general voicemails from the phone system to the appropriate staff members on a daily basis. The main church phone number is (205) 933-1830.

**For updates, make sure to look for any updates in Thursday's eUpdate mailing. You can also find information online at [ipc-usa.org/coronavirus.html](https://ipc-usa.org/coronavirus.html)**