

# Eagle River Presbyterian Church (ERPC)

## **COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Plan**

Prepared in Compliance with Municipal, State, & Federal Guidelines

Version 4, Approved by the Session, August 24, 2021

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”

Psalm 122

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## **I. BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, AND PLAN**

In response to the current COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, federal, state, and local government agencies, and Presbyterian Church (USA) bodies, have issued a variety of mandates, advisories, and recommendations designed to protect public health to the extent feasible while allowing basic aspects of community life to proceed.

The Municipality of Anchorage recommends each gathering organizer or host develop and maintain a COVID-19 Mitigation Plan that contains, at a minimum, the operating recommendations in Emergency Order 20 – Attachment A and other protocols to minimize close contact among individuals. The COVID-19 Mitigation Plan should be available to participants and staff (volunteers and employees), and/or be kept on the premises.

Eagle River Presbyterian Church (ERPC) has responded by preparing this COVID-19 Mitigation Plan (Plan) as a means to continue worshipping God and serving our community as the hands and feet of Christ while being respectful of personal situations, health needs, and responsibilities. We recognize that it is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and to conduct personal and communal activities safely. This plan provides for a safe in-person worship option for congregants. Other measures such as online worship, newsletter and mass emails, and regular phone contact by deacons will continue to maintain contact with and minister to sick, quarantined, or high-risk congregants that are unable to attend in-person worship. Primary sources and resources are listed at the end of the Plan.

### ***This ERPC COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Plan***

- Addresses the practices and protocols that will be used by ERPC to follow federal, state, and local requirements and recommendations to take reasonable care to protect staff, volunteers, and the public.
- Has been formally adopted by the Session as official policy.
- Will be reviewed and revised as conditions and circumstances warrant.
- Is to be posted near the entrances so it is available to all using the building.
- Applies to all persons on ERPC property, indoors or out, except transient or informal users of the driveways, parking lots, sidewalks, and similar outdoor areas.
- Is to be followed by all tenants or user-groups on ERPC property, unless that tenant or user-group has submitted an alternate and current risk mitigation plan that has been accepted by the Trustees on behalf of the Session. Tenant or user-group risk mitigation plans must follow Municipality of Anchorage requirements. The Session encourages tenants and user-group risk mitigation plans to also follow Municipality of Anchorage recommendations.

## **II. SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS, HEALTH SCREENING, VACCINATION, and LEVELS OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION**

- a. *Symptomatic individuals*: Per the Municipality of Anchorage, symptomatic or ill volunteers, employees, or participants may not participate in gatherings. Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested, isolate at home, and follow

public health recommendations. Close contacts of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to quarantine for 14 days after their last contact, or for another length of time as advised by a public health professional, and may not participate in gatherings during quarantine. Symptomatic, isolated or quarantined individuals may not enter ERPC buildings and may not remain on the premises or property. Additionally, ERPC requests that individuals with exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 not enter ERPC buildings or property.

- b. [Health Screening](#): Health alert screening signs will be posted at all entrances to ERPC buildings to assist in identifying individuals who should not enter. Individuals who have traveled recently must comply with the State of Alaska COVID-19 safe travel guidelines.
- c. [Vaccination](#): Congregants are encouraged to receive vaccinations when available, as part of ERPC's layered strategy.
  1. [Fully vaccinated](#): Per CDC guidance, fully vaccinated people can participate in many of the activities that they did before the pandemic; for some of these activities, they may choose to, or be recommended to, wear a mask based on community transmission. In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:
    - i. 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
    - ii. 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine
  2. [Unvaccinated](#): If you don't meet the above requirements, regardless of your age, you are NOT fully vaccinated. CDC recommends continuing to take all [precautions](#) (wear a mask, practice 6 ft. social distancing, avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces, and practice proper hand hygiene) until you are fully vaccinated.
  3. [Immunocompromised](#): If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system (a.k.a. *immunocompromised*), you may NOT be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all [precautions](#) (wear a mask, practice 6 ft. social distancing, avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces, and practice proper hand hygiene).
- d. [Level of Community Transmission](#): CDC guidance varies by levels of community transmission. The [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#) in the Sources and Resources section below provides a borough-level view of data for monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic in Alaska. This plan uses level of community transmission in its recommendations for social distancing and cloth face coverings below. ERPC will post the current level of community transmission by the entrance.

### III. SOCIAL DISTANCING, CLOTH FACE COVERINGS (MASKS), and SINGING

- a. Social Distancing: The Municipality of Anchorage recommends that all attendees, volunteers, and employees adhere to six feet (6 ft.) physical distancing protocols during indoor or outdoor gatherings. To accomplish this in the sanctuary, ERPC recommends *all* congregants and staff individually choose their seating location to allow at least 6 feet between non-household members when the Municipality of Anchorage is deemed a “substantial” or “high transmission” area by CDC. ERPC recommends unvaccinated/immunocompromised congregants and staff individually choose their seating location to allow at least 6 feet between non-household members when the area is deemed a “low” or “moderate” area of community transmission by CDC.
- b. Face Coverings: The Municipality of Anchorage recommends that masks or face coverings be worn at all times by all worship attendees. At ERPC, during “substantial” or “high” community transmission per the CDC, face coverings are recommended for *all* congregants. During “low” or “moderate” community transmission per the CDC, face coverings are optional for fully vaccinated congregants and are recommended for unvaccinated or immunocompromised congregants.
- c. Face covering exceptions:
  - 1. Staff members within the office suite when 6 feet social distancing can be maintained.
  - 2. The Pastor or Lay leader when speaking from the pulpit with electronic voice amplification.
  - 3. When individuals are performing manual labor within the building and they can maintain 10-feet or greater social distancing.
  - 4. Children less than two years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

Note: A CDC poster on proper mask use will be posted at all entrances. Disposable masks will be provided for those who forget to bring their own.

- d. Singing: Worship attendees may sing hymns. During singing of hymns, ERPC recommends masks or face coverings are worn and 6 feet social distancing is maintained by *all* congregants during “substantial” or “high” community transmission, and by unvaccinated or immunocompromised household groups only during “low” or “moderate” community transmission per CDC.

#### **IV. PERSONAL HYGIENE, SANITIZATION, and VENTILATION**

- a. Personal Hygiene: Each entrance to the building will have a station with hand sanitizer. Hand washing will primarily occur in the restrooms, with additional hand washing facilities available in the kitchen and fellowship hall. Hand sanitizer will be available in communal spaces where hand washing is not available. During a gathering, frequent hand cleansing is encouraged.

- b. Sanitation. ERPC janitorial staff will routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces including shared equipment and restrooms with products that meet EPA disinfection criteria and are appropriate for the surface. Use of shared equipment should be minimized. No additional disinfecting is necessary for instruments, electronic devices and technical equipment that is used by a single person during a gathering if the object will not be used by another individual for 7 days. The piano in the sanctuary and upright piano in the music room may be used by more than one person during a gathering provided that an approved disinfectant wipe is used on the keys and other touch surfaces between users.
- c. Ventilation: CDC recommends a layered strategy to reduce exposures to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This includes using multiple mitigation strategies with several layers of safeguards to reduce the spread of disease and lower the risk of exposure. While it may not be necessary to apply every consideration to be protective, implementing multiple mitigation strategies is recommended, if possible, to improve effectiveness. Our facility's ventilation system has been configured to run throughout worship services without heating. In addition, our plan is to implement other mitigation strategies in the layered approach including increasing access to outside air via doors and windows weather permitting, hand hygiene, along with social distancing and wearing face masks for unvaccinated or immunocompromised individuals.

## V. FACILITIES

- a. Entrance and Traffic Flow: To minimize contact, congregants will be encouraged to use the main front entrance, and user groups (food pantry, Star Group), the side front entrance.
- b. Sanctuary: When possible, the sanctuary is to be used only for weekly ERPC worship services. This will allow for time-dependent sanitization of soft and hard surfaces, bound materials, leaflets, pens, etc. Uses between Sunday services will require sanitization of touch points and surfaces. Seating will be unassigned allowing for proper spacing.
- c. Office Suite: The office suite (pastor's office, administrative assistant's office) are to be treated as non-public space for the pastor and administrative assistant only and are not to be entered by non-household members unless such persons are wearing a cloth face covering (if unvaccinated or immunocompromised) and such entry is necessary for church business.
- d. Restrooms: The men's and women's restrooms are available for hand washing and continued use. Their entry doors should remain propped open, when privacy is not needed, to facilitate hands-free access and egress for hand washing.
- e. Kitchen: The kitchen adjacent to the Narthex may be used for hand washing only by food preparers or servers and by others only when food and beverages are not being prepared or served.
- f. Nursery and classrooms: Will follow ERPC guidelines for safe social distancing, mask use, and proper hand hygiene.

- g. Food and Drink: Food and drink may be provided to gatherings. Providing food and drink outside the building is recommended when weather allows. Food and drink must be provided in a manner that prevents cross contamination, i.e. the transfer of microorganisms (in this case COVID-19) from one substance to another: food-to-food, equipment-to-food, or people-to-food. Mitigation strategies include:
- Do not allow patrons to serve themselves with shared dispensers or utensils
  - Use a server to distribute food while wearing PPE (mask and gloves)
  - Limit food to one food type to keep food service simple
  - Serve pre-prepared food and drink in individual portions, e.g. pre-sliced cake on a plate with a fork
  - Use a touchless drink dispenser, if available
  - Stack cups upside down so only the cup selected is touched
  - Consume food and drink with 6 feet social distancing between households if unvaccinated or immunocompromised.

## **VI. OCCUPANCY LEVELS**

Per the Municipality of Anchorage, numerical gathering recommendations are as follows:

- Limit all indoor gatherings involving consumption of food or drink to 25 people.
- Limit all indoor gatherings without food or drink to 35 people.

The gathering recommendation does not apply to gathering for the purpose of worship. Worship services would instead be subject to a capacity limitation based on ERPC following the recommendation to maintain six feet of physical distancing between different households.

Occupancy levels for ERPC worship will be set by the Worship Transition Team, in consultation with the Session. An individual may be designated to assist congregants with physical distancing. If necessary, congregants may be requested to sign up to attend worship in advance on the church website via SignupGenius.com or similar, or through the church office for those without internet access.

Note: A room's maximum occupancy numbers or congregant configuration may need to be reduced or altered depending on the activity or voice projection used at the gathering.

## **VII. SPECIAL PROTOCOLS**

- a. Worship Services: The pew racks are to be stocked with prayer request/visitor cards, pew envelopes, and pens or pencils so there is no sharing of such between household groups. Pew Bibles, hymnals, etc. will be distributed to support physically distanced seating patterns so pew items do not require distribution, sharing, or collection by ushers, thereby minimizing close contact. Use of the projection system will be encouraged to provide song lyrics, scripture readings, and other material for the functioning of communal worship, along with announcements and other presentations.
- b. Sacraments: In no instance may congregants remove Communion elements from a common source or share a common cup. Instead, communion will be administered via

use of church-provided “communion kits” that include individually wrapped bread and juice. Kits will be provided on a table in the Narthex for congregants to pick up on the way into the worship service and congregants will keep them at their physically distanced seating location for personal consumption. Those wearing masks should remove them only for consumption of communion and should don them again immediately following. The Pastor and Session shall develop protocols for safely administering Baptism, as needed.

- c. Offering: If a worship service is conducted within the sanctuary, a single offering plate may be placed at either side of the sanctuary entrance. Attendees may place checks, pew envelopes, or cash in the plate. The treasurer and/or designee will then count the money using hand washing and sanitization protocols, as needed. Online giving is available and will be strongly encouraged so that ushers and staff do not need to handle potentially contaminated surfaces.

## **VIII. ILLNESS and CONTACT TRACING**

- a. Illness: It is essential that ERPC be immediately informed of any persons who become ill or show symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in an ERPC building or gathering, or who have been at or inside the facility and within 48 hours become ill consistent with COVID-19 or tested positive for the coronavirus. An infected person can spread the virus for COVID-19 for 2 days prior to developing symptoms.
- b. Maintaining Contact Lists: [Contact tracing](#) is an essential partner to testing and illness reporting in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic. The Municipality of Anchorage recommends that the church make available a contact tracing log for individuals who wish to be informed of possible COVID-19 exposure, maintain these records for 30 days, and contain, at a minimum, date, first and last name, phone number, and email. To fulfill this recommendation, ERPC will post a sign-in book at the entrance to the church with clean writing utensils.

## **IX. COMPLIANCE and RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. Every gathering and user group, and its organizer or facilitator, is responsible for full compliance with this Plan. If such compliance is not possible for whatever circumstances, then the gathering may not occur, and persons are to depart ERPC property. Non-compliance may result in revocation of permission to enter ERPC premises. For indoor gatherings, ERPC must ensure that an adequate supply of soap, disinfectant, hand sanitizer, and paper towels are available. User group mitigation plan will need to be submitted by each group and kept on file in the church office.
- b. The Municipality of Anchorage recommends ERPC provide training for staff (volunteers or employees) on COVID-19 and the COVID-19 Mitigation Plan. Training at ERPC consists of reading this Mitigation Plan and requesting clarification from the designated individual.
- c. The Municipality of Anchorage recommends ERPC designate an individual to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff (volunteers or employees) should know who this person is and how to contact them. For ERPC, the designated

individual is Worship and Music Elder, Matthew Hobbie, and Alternate, Pastor Piper Cartland. Both can be reached through the ERPC Office, (907) 694-5753.

## **SOURCES AND RESOURCES (Local, State, Federal)**

CDC: COVID Data Tracker

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

CDC Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People, August 19, 2021

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

CDC: When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html#vaccinated>

Municipality of Anchorage Proclamation of Emergency Order EO-20-V2 "Do It For Summer" – May 3, 2021

<https://www.muni.org/covid-19/documents/20210430-eo-20v2-final-signed.pdf>

Municipality of Anchorage Emergency Order 19 – Attachment A – Gatherings – May 3, 2021

<https://www.muni.org/covid-19/documents/eo20-attachment-gatherings-a.pdf>

State of Alaska COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Information

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/guidance.aspx>

Alaska's Plan Forward

<https://covid19.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/05192020-Alaskas-Plan-Forward>

State of Alaska COVID 19 safe travel guidelines

<https://covid19.alaska.gov/travelers/>

CDC Cleaning and disinfecting your facility.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

CDC Considerations for communities of Faith

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>

CDC Childcare Programs that remain open

[Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open | CDC](#)

CDC COVID-19 Ventilation in Buildings

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html>

CDC "Improve How Your Mask Protects You"



[Improve How Your Mask Protects You | CDC](#)

CDC Contact Tracing

[Contact Tracing for COVID-19 | CDC](#)

CDC Health Alert Screening Poster

[CDC COVID-19 Screening Tool Paper Form](#)

CDC “Symptoms of COVID-19” Poster

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-What-You-Can-Do-High-Risk.pdf>

CDC “What you can do if you are high risk for COVID” Poster

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-What-You-Can-Do-High-Risk.pdf>

COVID Indoor Safety Model

[COVID-19 Indoor Safety Guideline \(indoor-covid-safety.herokuapp.com\)](https://indoor-covid-safety.herokuapp.com)

Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7330568/>