

Eagle River Presbyterian Church (ERPC)

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Plan

Prepared in Compliance with Municipal, State, & Federal Guidelines

Version 1, Approved by the Session, March 16, 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.

Per the Municipality of Anchorage, each gathering organizer or host must develop and maintain a COVID-19 Mitigation Plan that contains, at a minimum, the Operating Requirements in Emergency Order 19 – Attachment 1 and other protocols to minimize close contact among individuals. The COVID-19 Mitigation Plan must 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 meet federal, state, and local requirements to take reasonable care to protect staff, volunteers, and the public.
- 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.
- 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.

II. SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS, HEALTH SCREENING, and VACCINATION

- 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 10 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.

- 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: Recommendations are currently being developed by the State of Alaska for individuals who have had both 2-shot vaccine or one dose of the single vaccine. Currently there is no special consideration for fully vaccinated individuals, but we will continue to monitor this for updates. Congregants are encouraged to receive vaccinations when available, as part of ERPC's layered strategy.

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

- a. Social Distancing: Per the Municipality of Anchorage, all attendees, volunteers, and employees must adhere to six feet (6 ft.) physical distancing protocols during indoor or outdoor gatherings. To accomplish this in the sanctuary, congregants and staff must leave an empty pew between occupied rows, and at least 6 feet between non-household members on shared pews.
- b. Face Coverings: Masks or face coverings are required at all times for all worship attendees by the Municipality of Anchorage. In addition, cloth face coverings or masks must be worn by all persons within ERPC buildings when members of two or more household groups are present, except:
 1. Staff members within the office suite when 6 feet social distancing can be maintained.
 2. Individuals actively involved in producing online worship or other services when 6 feet social distancing may be maintained.
 3. The Pastor or Lay leader when speaking from the pulpit with electronic voice amplification.
 4. When individuals are performing manual labor within the building and they can maintain 10-feet or greater social distancing.
 5. 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.

- c. Singing: Indoors, no group singing or recitations using a projecting voice are allowed. The congregation will be encouraged to hum along to hymns.

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 cannot be relied on to provide a consistent measure of filtration since the circulation of air is dependent on heating needs. As a result, our plan is to implement other mitigation strategies in the layered approach including increasing access to outside air via doors and windows weather permitting, [social distancing](#), [wearing face masks](#), and [hand hygiene](#).

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, AA), 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 but exiting the sanctuary will be by back row first. Congregants will be encouraged not to congregate in the Narthex, and instead exit the church and conduct any conversations socially distanced outside the building.
- 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 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 but is closed for all other uses until further notice.
- f. Nursery and classrooms: Will follow [CDC](#) guidelines for safe social distancing, mask use, and proper hand hygiene.
- g. Food and Drink: No food or drink may be provided at a gathering or shared by non-household members. This does not apply to individual offices.

VI. OCCUPANCY LEVELS

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

- All indoor gatherings involving consumption of food or drink are limited to 25 people.
- All indoor gatherings without food or drink are limited to 35 people.
- All outdoor gatherings involving consumption of food or drink are limited to 60 people.
- All outdoor organized gatherings without food or drink are limited to 100 people.

The gathering limitation does not apply to gathering for the purpose of worship where masks are continuously worn and where food and drink are not consumed. Worship services are instead subject to a capacity limitation based on a requirement 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 will 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. Masks may be removed only for consumption of communion and are to be donned 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. Per the Municipality of Anchorage, the church must maintain a log of everyone who is present, maintain these records for 30 days, and contain, at a minimum date, first and last name, phone number, and email. To fulfill this requirement, ERPC will post a sign-in book at the entrance to the church with clean writing utensils to record information for all participants. During worship or other gatherings this list will be maintained by the greeter or the gathering host.

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. Per the Municipality of Anchorage, ERPC is required to 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. Per the Municipality of Anchorage, ERPC must 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)

Municipality of Anchorage Proclamation of Additional Emergency Order EO-19 “Make it a Safe Spring” – March 8, 2021

<https://www.muni.org/covid-19/documents/final%20signed%20eo19.pdf>

Municipality of Anchorage Emergency Order 19 – Attachment I – Gatherings, Individuals, social organizations, religious: Gatherings including religious, wedding, funeral, political, fundraising or other group events – March 8, 2021

<https://www.muni.org/covid-19/documents/eo-19%20attachment%20i%20operating%20criteria%20-%20gatherings.final.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)