

Road Map for Reopening

Until the last Session meeting, our primary focus has been figuring out how and when to return to indoor in-person worship. As soon as that decision was made, we pivoted to our next steps in reopening. There are a multitude of considerations in this plan: what comes first, second, third? How do we prioritize small vs. large groups? Do outward reaching things like mission come first or inward supporting things like committees? We are trying to get a plan written as quickly as possible while allowing time to be thoughtful and discerning about the right process and steps. We appreciate your patience as we keep working on this.

This is a road map for reopening organized by months. Session earnestly hopes the COVID situation will continue to improve and allow for this plan to be implemented at its current pace or faster than written here. However, the pandemic is not yet over. One thing has been very clear throughout COVID, the situation and our knowledge of it can rapidly change. Just like with using a road map on a car trip, if conditions significantly worsen or radically improve, we may need to shift things around with this plan. This requires all of us to remain vigilant and flexible should change be necessary.

** Indicates that these items must observe the Communal Safety Protocols as outlined in the Safety Plan approved by Session on February 24, 2021.*

March*

Worship Support*

Bells, LCW Band without singing, distribution of Sunday Flowers.

These items were approved by Session during the fall phase of indoor in-person worship. With the recent return to indoor in-person worship, these items are allowed to continue or restart.

Outdoor Conversation*

The initial fall safety plan included a line, "please do not linger on campus after worship." With the recent return to indoor in-person worship, we are shifting this policy to allow outdoor conversation before and after services. This is already happening organically at Vespers. This change makes Sunday morning consistent with that.

Indoor Mid-Week Funerals*

Allow indoor mid-week funerals on a case by case basis in consultation with Pastors.

Arrangements for funerals are always made in consultation with the Pastors, so this allows the Pastors to offer this option when pastorally appropriate.

April*

Office Open by Appointment Only*

Administrative staff will return to the office Monday-Thursday 8:00-5:00 and Friday 8:00-1:00. These are the office hours from before the pandemic. Professional staff will be encouraged to return to the office full time, but flexibility will be allowed for them to work from home as appropriate in consultation with the Head of Staff. Visitors will be allowed in the office by appointment only. This gives staff time to get vaccinated before the office is fully open.

Kids at Work*

Once a week 2 chefs will use Lewis Hall Kitchen for 2-3 hours to package the menu materials then deliver them to the students. This is a similar use of space as Flower Distribution and enables Kids at Work to support their kids and fight food insecurity. The Witness Committee will continue to coordinate with Kids at Work and communicate with CRT about Communal Safety Protocols as needed.

May*

Office Open*

Administrative staff will return to the office Monday-Thursday 8:00-5:00 and Friday 8:00-1:00. These are the office hours from before the pandemic. Professional staff will be encouraged to return to the office full time, but flexibility will allow them to work from home as appropriate in consultation with the Head of Staff. Receptionists return. Drop-in visitors allowed.

Weddings*

These can be scheduled on weekends or any other day of the week.

Mid-week Small Group Meetings*

Mid-week Committees and Bible Studies of 15 people or less may resume meeting indoors or outdoors on campus while observing Communal Safety Protocols. We put this in the month of May because we needed to get the office open first in order to coordinate and host the scheduling of these meetings and to give more time for the vaccine to be distributed in Rowan County. Currently, Rowan County is only 12% vaccinated, which is 6% behind the state as a whole.

June*

CRT will start discerning in this month when it will seem safe to begin phased relaxing of Communal Safety Protocols like social distancing, masking, or temperature taking.

Nursery*

Reopen the Nursery during Worship. We waited to reopen the Nursery until the Day School finished for the year. That way, there is no concern about cross-contamination from shared space. By the fall, this concern about shared space should no longer be an issue.

Outdoor refreshments*

Allow outdoor refreshments like lemonade, coffee, and treats. The Fellowship Committee can work out how to distribute these safely with Communal Safety Protocols in mind and keep CRT informed.

VBS*

Allow for indoor in-person VBS for children of or connected to our church. Cap registration at 30 children. Christian Education committee is responsible for figuring out how to observe all Communal Safety Protocols and keep CRT informed.

TWAM*

Allow for TWAM to build two Habitat houses in Salisbury. Youth will sleep in their own homes. The Youth Committee is responsible for figuring out how to observe all Communal Safety Protocols and keep CRT informed.

Summer Meals Program*

We are typically a site for the Summer Meals Program through RSS. They have a waiver through the USDA to allow food to be taken home instead of eaten on site. The Evangelism Committee will work out how to host this program with Communal Safety Protocols in mind and keep CRT informed.

Coming Up in July and Beyond:

Sunday School
Outdoor Fellowship
Mid-week medium gatherings
Other groups using our space
Outdoor Singing with masks
Indoor Fellowship
Choral/Band Singing
Congregational Singing Masked
Congregational Singing Unmasked

Questions you might have:

Why isn't Sunday School opening sooner?

The current safety plan has traffic flow considerations that cannot be implemented if people are traveling to and from different Sunday School classes on Sunday mornings. At this point, temperature checking would have to be more extensive on Sunday mornings if we opened Sunday School now. Most important, classes meeting in-person while Communal Safety Protocols are in place will have to socially distance. We do not have room for all our Sunday School classes to socially distance on a Sunday morning. For example, Everyman's wouldn't be able to appropriately socially distance right now even if they met in Fellowship Hall. Lewis Hall and the Sanctuary cannot be reused on Sundays due to the need to clean and sanitize. Hopefully, by mid-summer, we can relax some of these protocols to allow the more robust gathering of Sunday School classes on Sunday mornings.

If my group is fully vaccinated, can we meet on campus now?

We considered this idea at length. Ultimately, organizing any of our opening protocols based on unique group vaccination rates creates a situation where it is very likely someone will feel discriminated against if they are unvaccinated. Even if certain committees have a 100% vaccination rate for members, that will not be the case for all committees. Unvaccinated individuals would either not be allowed to attend or would be the reason a group can't meet in person. This puts too much pressure on those who are not vaccinated. We do not want to get caught up in a vaccination discrimination situation.

Why are we continuing Communal Safety Protocols for so long?

While cases are dropping and vaccination is increasing, the threat of Coronavirus to individuals and our community remains. Safety Protocols mitigate the risk of COVID spread in our church and community while herd immunity is reached through vaccination. At the current pace, 50% of the population will be vaccinated by May, 70% by July, and 90% by early August. Current estimates suggest herd immunity will be reached when 70% - 90% of the population is immune. Therefore, until herd immunity is achieved, mitigation strategies remain essential to reduce spread, to give a reprieve to our healthcare workers, and to reduce the risk of new variants emerging. We would be delighted to speed this plan up if new data emerges suggesting we have reached herd immunity faster than estimated.

Why can't our Choir or Praise Band sing sooner?

While we look forward to bringing singing fully back, it remains one of the most effective means of transmitting the virus. Singing aerosolizes the virus and sends it greater distances than 10 feet. There is no way yet to enable the choir or Praise Band to sing that does not greatly increase the risk of spread for those singing and for the congregation. We hope to bring singing back in phases once our county has significantly lower new case counts and is much closer to herd immunity. Again, we can hasten the return of singing if the situation improves more rapidly than current projections. For a detailed explanation of the science behind singing and its risks, see [Singing and COVID20](#).