

Together again!

MIPC Resumes In-Person Worship

The past 13 or so months have been very difficult. The staff and session of Merritt Island Presbyterian Church (MIPC) misses you and longs to be together. Our goal in keeping to online worship has been to share the care and compassion of God's love. Over these months we have had much to mourn about and much to celebrate. We look to celebrate being back together again - both in-person and on-line!

On April 29, the MIPC Session voted that, beginning on May 23, we will offer **both in-person and on-line worship** opportunities. We recognize that though gathering in person assumes inherent risks, there are those who have a physical longing to be back in the sanctuary. We also acknowledge there are some who are not ready to return, and some who love having the freedom to connect with us wherever they might be. We also want to affirm that neither way to worship is better than the other. God does not dwell in the sanctuary but in our hearts!

Worship for both in-person and on-line will continue to be at 10:00 a.m. Our on-line worship will remain streamed on our [Facebook page](#).

The in-person option does come with certain guidelines and expectations that will help mitigate the risk to the health and wellbeing of our congregation.

We ask that you **Stay Home** and continue worshipping online if:

- ◆ You have a temperature of 100.4 or higher.
- ◆ You have other symptoms of illness. ([CDC Guidelines](#))
- ◆ You have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms.
- ◆ There is any chance you might be a risk to others.

We remind you that there are additional risks of gathering for in-person worship and encourage you to prayerfully consider your attendance if you are in a vulnerable group. ([CDC Guidelines](#))

- ◆ Over the age of 60
- ◆ Not fully vaccinated
- ◆ Have compromised immune systems or comorbidities

Please remember that in-person worship will look, feel and be different. Here are things that you can expect when returning to in-person worship:

- ◆ Temperature checks will be performed before entering narthex and **masks are required** to be properly worn while in church. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided.
- ◆ Hand sanitizer stations are available at the entrance to our worship areas, and their use is encouraged.
- ◆ We will be practicing social distancing before, during, and after our worship services. Social distancing in the sanctuary is required as indicated in the pews and by ushers.
- ◆ Families are encouraged to sit together.

- ◆ Others are required to observe distancing recommendations.
- ◆ In order to accomplish social distancing we will be limiting worship attendance to 50 people for the time being.
- ◆ Ushers will assist you in seating and will dismiss the congregation by row upon completion of the worship service, to prompt social distancing while leaving the building.
- ◆ People attending our service will notice there are no hymnals or Bibles in the pews. Bulletins will be provided in the pews or you may print it and bring it with you, or view on your smartphone or tablet.
- ◆ No singing during the service or while in building with others. Congregants may hum or prayerfully read music in lieu of singing.
- ◆ When “Passing the Peace” please remain in your seats and wave or nod, NO hugging or handshaking.
- ◆ Offering plates will be located just inside our worship areas to receive your tithes and offerings, thereby eliminating the need to pass the plates.
- ◆ On Communion Sundays, prepackaged Communion elements will be available on a table in the narthex. You are encouraged to pick them up on your way into the service, thereby eliminating the need to pass the elements.
- ◆ Nursery and Children’s Church will not be provided during this phase of opening for in-person worship services. (A determination will be made later as to when to restart these services.)

It is also very important that any person who experiences symptoms or tests positive for COVID after having attended worship in person MUST notify the church immediately so that contact tracing can take place. Notification can be made to the pastor, a deacon or elder, or the church office.

The opening committee has been working very hard to make this day happen. To make it possible, the back of the sanctuary has been modified to accommodate the video and audio systems that will facilitate both in-person and online worship. A couple of short pews have been removed in the back to make room for this update.

This past year we have learned to live life differently. As we start to move forward, please understand the committee has been in prayer for God’s will and we have listened to all who have offered suggestions. We all have changed and as we move forward, we ask that you keep an open mind.

MIPC looks forward to welcoming you in person **or** on the web! Please join us!

Blessings,

The Session of MIPC

Cindy Bottomley, Dave Hertzler, Leslie Neihouse, Brian Poland, Marcia Wilcox, John Shuford, Peggy Boekhout, Carlos Assemany, Lorrie Peek, Pat Smith, Craig Smoot and Christina Greenawalt