

Dear Hershey PCA Members & Friends:

This Sunday, October 18, 2020 we return to our in-person, **inside** worship service at 10:00 AM. We will also **continue to livestream** our service on our Facebook page for those remaining at home or at another location.

In light of this change, I thought it good to write with a few items to help set expectations for our return inside. Please take the time to review before Sunday. As we move inside, several changes will become immediately apparent, some because of the pandemic and some because of the change in ownership of our building since we last met to worship inside.

**First, changes because of the new ownership of our building.** With the purchase of our building by the St. Joan of Arc RC Parish in early 2020, our office and worship location inside the building have changed. St. Joan's has been very accommodating in working with us allowing us the ability to remain in their building along with their school. For that we are thankful. We will now meet in the lowest level of the building in the large center room where we first held our evening Core Group Meetings when we began 5 years ago. This room is larger and of a better shape than the cafeteria where we have been meeting in the past year. It will allow us to double in size and still meet together in one service (once Covid concerns are over). To enter the building, park at the lower level, or if that is full, in the front of the building or along the grass in the back of the building, and find the door with our signage. For this first week, someone should be there to greet you. (There will be only one door for entry to the building, please use this entrance.) There are no steps inside the building that will need to be climbed. Our new lease makes this whole floor available to us on Sunday mornings. In the future, we hope to reintroduce other Sunday morning events and activities as we are able.

**Second, changes because of the Coronavirus pandemic.** As with every other aspect of life, the pandemic is impacting how we are choosing to meet. We are committed to do our best to offer ways to gather in community together. We believe that public worship and fellowship are important parts of our life of faith. At the same time, we will need to learn how best to worship during this time. As we move inside, we are taking steps to begin as safely as we know how, and over time as we learn more, we may be able to adjust some of these things. So please be patient and flexible with your own desires about these things as we try to make decisions that are best for all of us, and especially for those most at risk of serious consequences if infected. Feel free to talk to us about your thoughts on these matters. Again, we are taking pains to meet safely because we want to affirm the value and the privilege that is ours in being able to gather publicly and freely to worship God together.

So, should you attend in-person or by livestream? And, what will it look like when you arrive on Sunday for worship?

- **Should you come to in-person worship or join by livestream?** You will have to make that decision. We believe both can be good choices depending on your situation. Please do not come to in-person worship if you have Covid symptoms, have an elevated temperature, have recently been diagnosed with Covid, or have been in close contact with someone with Covid. If one of those is the case, please join us by livestream until you can assess your status. We ask you to be careful about this matter for the sake of others. It may also be a good choice to join us by livestream if you are in a category of higher risk of severe illnesses. For information about symptoms, please refer to this website by the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>. For guidance about when to quarantine, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>.

- **If you do come to in-person worship, someone will meet you at the exterior door to provide a mask if you do not have one of your own.** The new owners of the building are requiring the use of masks for everyone in the building ages 3 and up while in the building. This follows the policy they have in place for their school. The only exception to this is when someone is leading worship (speaker, lead singers, etc.) they will unmask during the time they are leading. Such persons will be on the stage area when they lead to provide maximum distance from the congregation. Such worship leaders will have their temperature checked and be asked about possible symptoms prior to being cleared to lead in this way. This one exception to the masking policy is in keeping with our owner's practice and request. If you prefer to worship unmasked, we ask you to join by livestream.
- **At first, we will offer only in-person worship on Sunday mornings.** Children are very welcome at the service. There will be no nursery, Junior Church, or onsite classes. Our new lease allows for space usage for these things, and we will add them as we are able. (The afternoon classes—adult/youth at 1:00 PM and children at 4:00 PM—will continue by Zoom meeting.)
- **When you enter the worship room, an usher will seat you.** We will be doing this for the first few weeks at least, in order to help us learn how to space out appropriately. The room will be set with additional spacing between rows and with various groupings of chairs to accommodate different size individual and family groups. Please allow larger groupings of chairs for larger families.
- **To begin, we will not be singing out loud as a congregation.** There will be music, but songs during the service will be sung only by the lead singers. This is because of the concern of increased risk with singing in an enclosed space, as well as the difficulty of singing in a mask, and is in keeping with the desire and practice of the owners of our building. Feel free to hum along or use this as a time of meditation and reflection on the words. It may even be a time that you find you are able to engage with the words of the songs in new ways as you pay attention more closely to what is being sung. As a Session, we are committed to congregational singing and have wrestled with this decision. It is not what we desire, but in the current situation we believe at this point it is the best way for us to begin. We will continue to assess this as we learn more about the number of people in attendance, our ability to spread out in the new worship space, the developing research and information about the virus, and the ongoing direction from our landlord. Again, if you prefer to worship by singing out loud, for now, we ask you to join by livestream.
- **After the service, weather permitting, we ask you to take time to fellowship outside rather than inside.** This will allow you to keep adequate space and have time to catch up and have important conversations. Be alert to traffic as St. Joan's will have people coming to activities at that time as well. During this time try to greet new people or people you do not know well. The playground is open for use (though now on the opposite side of the building). Also, the soccer field can be used as a place to gather. We are praying that the Lord continues to add to our number, so keep a look out for new folks the Lord brings to us, and welcome them!

I really enjoyed the ability to worship outdoors for so long into the fall. Our move indoors will allow us to continue to offer an in-person worship time along with the livestream into the winter months. I'm looking forward to worshipping our God with you on Sunday!

Sincerely, and for the Session,  
David Kertland, pastor  
Hershey PCA