

Updated 9/27/20



PROTOCOL FOR THE REOPENING OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MEMPHIS

First Baptist Church of Memphis considers our first concern, during this time of the 2020 *Covid-19* pandemic, to be the health and safety of its members and all those who participate in its ministries. There is a theological foundation for such a concern: the church is the people, not the buildings. And, while we recognize the presence and validity of the church as an institution, our major priority is to function as a living organism, the presence of Christ in the Memphis/Mid-South region.

We will follow the guidance of appropriate governmental agencies, Church Health, and the collaboration of major congregational leaders in Memphis, to determine next steps. They will be based on the following guiding principles:

1. We will rely on the medical and scientific community as our primary resource for information.
2. We will work collaboratively to responsibly care for the spiritual needs of those who contract COVID-19.
3. We will collaborate to determine when returning to in-person worship is possible. We will monitor data from the health department on an on-going basis and will adjust, as necessary.

First Baptist Church will utilize a three-phase plan for the re-opening of our building:

Phase One—Will begin on Sept. 13; a small group of worship leaders will gather in the sanctuary to provide a time of worship that will be broadcast via radio and social media.

Phase Two—Regular worship services will resume, and the sanctuary will be open to the congregation. Sunday School classes and small groups will not meet during this phase.

Phase Three—Sunday School classes and small groups will begin meeting.

The church will provide necessary health and safety items such as hand sanitizer and tissues. We will use appropriate cleaning supplies to disinfect surfaces. All individuals who enter our building will be expected to wear a face covering and are encouraged to bring their own masks and other personal protective items. Those entering the building without a face covering will be provided one as they are available.

Our protocols are intended to mitigate risks associated with Covid-19. However, please understand that gathering during a pandemic involves some level of risk. It is recommended that all people who are considered to be in a vulnerable population, such as those who are chronically ill or elderly, should at this time worship with us by means of radio or the internet. For more information please visit www.cdc.gov.

At the time deemed appropriate for resuming the use of our facilities the following protocols will be maintained:

1. Use only the Welcome Center doors to enter and exit the building during phases one and two.

2. Masks/face coverings will be worn while inside the building.
3. Hand sanitizer will be available upon entering the building.
4. Please do not bring food or drink into the building.
5. We ask that everyone go directly to the sanctuary entrances upon entering, without lingering in the Welcome Center. A greeter will be there to provide guidance and assistance. Everyone who enters will be asked to sign in which will assist with contact tracing if necessary.
6. Please sit in designated pews only. Some pews will be indicated as unavailable.
7. Social distancing guidelines will be in effect. Except for nuclear families, distances of at least six feet should be maintained between worshipers. These distances should also be maintained while entering and exiting the buildings. Children should remain with their parents at all times. The nursery will be closed during the initial part of phase 2 but will be reopened as soon as feasible.
8. During phases one and two, there will be no access to the area north & south of the Welcome Center.
9. We ask that everyone exit the building after services and not linger in the Welcome Center. A greeter will be present to provide guidance and assistance.
10. Offering plates will not be passed during the service but will be located near the piano and organ. You are asked to place your offering there as you enter or exit.
11. Appropriate health and safety measures will be taken during communion. Instructions will be given during worship.
12. Assisted hearing devices will be assigned to individuals, and each will be kept in a separate sealed bag between uses.

Restroom use:

13. Only the restrooms in the Welcome Center will be open for use.
14. Please do not enter if there is a sign marked "Occupied." You are asked to exit the restroom and wait until the facility is available.
15. Please use the available disinfectant spray (or handwipes) to **clean the toilet handle after flushing, and the faucet handle after washing your hands.**

The health and well-being of our church and community is our priority. We will continue to do everything we can to make our worship services as meaningful as possible, and ask for your understanding, as well as your prayers, that the day will come when we can fellowship and enjoy the presence of one another in the holy presence of God, as we have been called to do.