



Dear EPC Family and Friends ~

Session met for our regular stated meeting on Monday, August 9, and with heavy hearts voted to **remain at West Campus for worship through the end of the year including the first two Sundays of the new year – August 15, 2021 - January 10, 2022.** All current *Measures of Care* remain in place (included below). **Please note that beginning August 15, worship will return to our traditional 10:45am service time** and will continue to gradually add in elements of the worship service that have been missing from the “short form” order of service, though for the time being van service and singing remain suspended. **Online worship will continue** with video links available via email, the EPC website, and the EPC Facebook page.

This decision was not made lightly and only after extensive discussion and prayer. Session reiterates that our goal is to return Downtown as soon as it is prudent to do so, and elders will re-evaluate emerging trends, medical and county health recommendations, and safety considerations monthly between now and January 10, 2022, hoping and praying that conditions improve. Most alarming at this time is the rapid rise of the COVID-19 Delta variant in our community as well as concerns about the emerging Lambda variant, the significant increase in pediatric cases and hospitalizations for COVID, the return of area hospitals to strict visitation limits and heightened COVID protocols, and the number of area hospitals at capacity, especially in pediatric units, ahead of the start of the public school year.

Beyond Sunday mornings, Session will return to online meetings, though our buildings remain open to EPC committees, small groups, and community partners at both campuses who adhere to our *Measures of Care*. **We ask that masks continue to be worn in Sunday worship and at any function where children under 12 are present.** While many in our church family are now fully vaccinated and “break through cases” for those vaccinated currently tend to be less severe than in those who are unvaccinated, vaccines are still unavailable to our youngest members. Please help ensure that EPC is welcoming and safe for our entire church family, masking around our youngest members as a sign of loving others as we love ourselves.

We know anxieties are high, grief is deep, and that hope is hard to see after months of improvement met by rapid reemergence of this dreadful disease. Elders encourage the whole church family to extend grace – to yourself, each other, and the larger community – and to contact Pastor Phyl with any and all concerns. We also know that this decision will mean quickly adjusting expectations for the August 15 worship service and that many in our church family will have questions and concerns. Elders will be calling each member of our EPC family over the next few days to update you and check-in. We are grateful for the evident Spirit of God in our midst and the spirit of EPC which reaffirms time and again that for our church family “*the church is the people.*” We are grateful to be God’s people together with you.

*Yours in Christ,
Emporia Presbyterian Church Session*

Measures of Care

Please stay home and worship online if you are not feeling well,
including (but not limited to) fever, low-grade fever, cough, sneezing, respiratory / flu-like symptoms.

Building Norms / Care of God's House:

- **Masks are to be worn at any function where children under 12 are present.**
- 6' social distancing will be practiced.
- The nursery is closed.
- Restrooms and elevators are open.

Worship Norms / Care for the Congregation:

- Bulletins will be provided.
- Responsive readings will occur.
- Congregational singing will not occur.
- Wave at or bow to neighbors to Pass the Peace.
- Offering plates are stationed by the doors.
- Communion elements will be individually packaged and available before worship or you may bring your own on communion Sundays.
- Online worship will continue in addition to in-person worship.

Personal Norms / Care for our Neighbors:

- Online worship will continue in addition to in-person worship.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
- Worship online if you or a member of your household does not feel well.
- Extend grace and empathy to all and to self.

*"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,
you did it to me." ~Matthew 25:40*

Thank you for taking care of our church family and our community in God's name.

*Yours in Christ,
Emporia Presbyterian Church Session*