

# **Middletown United Methodist Church**

## **COVID Protocols**

### **Updated February 22, 2021**

The Middletown United Methodist Church family, and especially the Leadership Team, has spent a great deal of time in prayer and careful consideration regarding how we will continue to serve our God and our neighbor in a COVID safe and controlled manner. We have been advised by our Bishop and conference leadership and it has been made clear that our regional and global leadership is prioritizing safety and does not wish for a single transmission of COVID to be attributed to our church activity. We want to share the Gospel and not COVID.

Mask wearing and social distancing will be mandatory as it has been shown to reduce transmission in indoor settings. It is important to understand that, while you may feel you are not at risk of catching the virus, the mask worn by you protects those around you and should be done as an act of love towards your brothers and sisters in Christ. Please understand there will be no exemptions to mask wearing. If you choose to not wear a mask or are unable, you are invited to continue joining Middletown United Methodist Church in worship, small groups, etc. electronically via the livestream or virtual video chats.

*Just as COVID is a living virus, this document is also a living document.* The Leadership team appreciates your patience as statements within this document will need to change. Please continue to visit the church's website, Facebook page, and the Weekly Communicator for the most recent updates.

#### **I. Worship**

- A. We are now offering face-to-face worship in the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. Our online worship and conference call experiences will always continue. Anyone uncomfortable gathering for face-to-face worship is always invited to join us via the livestream or conference call. Please note that there are guidelines for face-to-face worship inside and outside.
- B. Guidelines for Face-to-Face Worship: Inside
  - 1. The fellowship hall is now open for worship and will be used to accommodate overflow from the sanctuary. The worship celebration will be simulcast into the fellowship hall via video monitors.
  - 2. Attendance for worship celebration will be limited to 50 people in the sanctuary and 50 people in the fellowship hall.
  - 3. Parking Lot to Church Door
    - a) Cars are encouraged to park every other parking space.
    - b) Masks should be put on prior to exiting the car. If congregant did not bring a mask, one will be provided at the entrance.
    - c) People are encouraged to keep 6 feet apart in the parking lot and as approaching the building.

- d) Welcome sign posted at entrance: “WELCOME BACK/WEAR MASK/6 FEET APART/HAND SANITIZER AVAILABLE.”
  - e) Door will be propped open, weather permitting.
4. Church Door to Sanctuary
- a) Welcome Team members will be inside: at main door and at the entrance to the sanctuary.
  - b) Welcome signs will be posted: “WEAR MASK/6 FEET APART/HAND SANITIZER AVAILABLE.”
  - c) Welcome Team member will direct all to sanitize hands, offer mask if they don’t have one and then direct them to sanctuary entrance.
  - d) Tape will be on the floor leading to the sanctuary to indicate a proper 6-foot distance.
  - e) Welcome Team members at sanctuary entrance will direct congregants to their seats.
  - f) Only if a congregant requests a Bible or hymnal will the usher provide one.
  - g) Communion Sunday - the elements will be individually wrapped and available for worshippers to pick up on their way into the worship space.
  - h) Offering plate will be at the entrance of the worship space.
  - i) Seating:
    - (1) The first pew on each side will remain unused.
    - (2) Worship leadership (the band, etc.) will be sitting in the blue chairs on the worship platform unless sitting with family in congregation.
    - (3) The seats behind the glass windows will be reserved for the Welcome Team members.
    - (4) No hymnals or Bibles will be found in pews. Worship will be BYOB-bring your own Bible, hymnal, and order of worship.
    - (5) Seating is not assigned and pews are not blocked off. Instead people must sit so as to maintain at least a 6-foot social distance between non-cohorted individuals. Be advised simply skipping a pew does not maintain a 6-foot social distance.
  - j) Entrance to classroom corridor will be blocked with “No Entry” sign.
  - k) The 2 bathrooms closest to sanctuary will be open.
  - l) Hand sanitizer will be at the bathroom entrances.
  - m) If someone leaves the sanctuary to use the bathroom, a Welcome Team member will direct them and remind them to sanitize hands on way in and way out of bathroom.

5. Church Door to Fellowship Hall

- a) In the event that the sanctuary is filled to recommended capacity of 50 people, overflow will be directed by Welcome Team members to the fellowship hall. Seating will be based on a first come first served basis.
- b) Folding chairs will be available at the doors to the fellowship hall. Congregants will take their own chair(s) from the racks provided, and set themselves/family up, while adhering to the social distancing protocol of 6 feet. Assistance will be provided, if needed.
- c) Elements for communion (when applicable) and offering plate will be inside the fellowship hall.

6. Sanctuary During Worship Celebrations

- a) All worship leadership and musicians will be in position and ready for service.
- b) All Welcome Team members will sit behind the glass in the Narthex (one should have ability to see the main entrance door from their seat and have masks and sanitizer available for late comers).
- c) For Communion Sunday, Pastor Derrick will have any elements he chooses to use during the service already in place, and he will remove them at the end of service.
- d) Singing by the congregation is permitted but it must be done softly while wearing a face covering.
- e) Those leading congregational singing must be spaced 6 feet apart.
- f) The Maximum number of singers leading congregational song at any given time must be no more than 10.

7. Exiting the Building

- a) Pastor Derrick will advise all to wait in their seats until instructed to exit and remind people to proceed to their cars and not congregate at this time; if Communion Sunday, will remind all to pick up any trash/wrappings and dispose on way out.
- b) There will be an open trash can at exit for trash.
- c) Inside Welcome Team members will direct worshippers to leave, starting with the rear of the church, at a pace that allows for 6 feet of distance as they exit.
- d) Worshippers in the fellowship hall will be directed to exit by Welcome Team members, maintaining 6 feet of distance, beginning at the front of the Hall (area closest to doors). Chairs are to be left in place.

e) Playground will be closed.

8. Cleaning

- a) Praise team will wipe down sound board and their own electronics.
- b) Pastor Derrick will wipe down all of his equipment.
- c) Music Director is responsible for cleaning all her equipment.
- d) Carolyn Hooper will wait several hours before cleaning the sanctuary, fellowship hall and bathrooms.
- e) Careful attention will be paid to “high touch” areas such as bathrooms, wooden backrest of pews where people rest their hands, door handles, light switches, and chairs used in fellowship hall.
- f) As additional worship celebrations are launched, this procedure will need to be modified and additional cleaners may be necessary.

9. Offerings

- a) Worship leadership will gather the Sunday morning offering from the plate and properly pass it off to the people designated by our financial policy and procedures.

C. Guidelines for Face-to-Face Worship: Outside

- 1. Guidelines for face-to-face worship outside are very similar to the inside worship.
- 2. Please follow the Inside Worship guideline sections.
- 3. The following differences apply:
  - a) BYOB (Bible) and chair--please bring your own chair, no chairs will be provided.
  - b) Please bring your order of worship printout or email as there will be no video monitors outside with the song words on display.
  - c) Family units will be guided to sit at least 6 feet away from other family units.
  - d) Please pay close attention to the church’s Facebook page and voicemail system for last minute changes due to inclement weather.
  - e) Please note: there will be no “awning” so those with sun/heat issues may want to join us virtually.

**II. COMMUNITY GROUPS**

- A. The term community groups refer to Boy Scouts, Al-Anon, and other similar groups. These groups are not church specifically run/organized ministries.
- B. Community groups at this time are not able to use the interior of the church building.
- C. Community groups are invited to use the grounds and parking lot.
- D. Unfortunately, at this time we can not offer the use of the bathrooms.

### **III. Church Ministries and Missions**

- A. The term Church Ministries and Missions refers to small groups, children's ministries, and youth ministries. These groups are specifically run/organized by the church and church membership.
- B. All Church Ministries and Missions are encouraged to continue to meet virtually (via ZOOM).
- C. Church Ministries and Missions may meet outside. The following guidelines for meeting outside must be followed:
  - 1. Social distancing of 6 feet or more is required.
  - 2. Hand sanitizer must be available for all participants.
  - 3. Food can be provided in a no-contact, pre-packaged manner consistent with the distribution of Communion elements.
  - 4. People shall bring their own beverages.
  - 5. If the church property is used, the bathrooms must be available. People will need to use hand sanitizer before and after entering the bathroom. Masks must be worn when entering the church building. The adult leaders will need to contact the church custodian before the event so that the bathrooms are properly cleaned after the event.
  - 6. This would be a wonderful time to utilize the fire pit or any of our lawns.
- D. Church Ministries and Missions may meet inside as needed. The following guidelines for meeting inside must be followed:
  - 1. At this time Ministries and Missions groups may only use the fellowship hall.
  - 2. Group size may not exceed 20 people
  - 3. All participants must wear a face covering and maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet.
  - 4. Food can be provided in a no-contact, pre-packaged manner consistent with the distribution of Communion elements.
  - 5. People shall bring their own beverages.
  - 6. At this time there shall be no games that resemble an exercise class in the fellowship hall. For example, no running.
  - 7. The kitchen is not to be used.
  - 8. No classrooms are to be used.
  - 9. The only bathrooms that shall be used are the ones by the fellowship hall.
  - 10. The group leader is responsible for sanitizing the bathrooms and fellowship hall.
  - 11. The fellowship hall may not be used while the preschool is in session.

### **IV. STAFF**

- A. Staff members shall be permitted to return to working in the church office as they are comfortable.
- B. Social distancing of 6 feet or more is required. No more than 2 people each in the church and pastor's office at one time.

- C. All employees shall wear masks when working within proximity of other people.
- D. Staffing hours and compensation means will be decided for each employee based on the requirements of the job and the requests of the employee.

#### **V. Preschool**

- A. The Preschool staff and Preschool board will develop and maintain their own COVID safety protocol. Said protocol must meet or exceed all state guidelines.
- B. Visitors:
  - 1. While the preschool is in session no one is to visit/enter the church building who is not a staff member of the preschool or a student.
  - 2. If someone needs to enter the building, they must contact the Office Manager, Anne Cullen, who will then inform the LPP Director. If agreeable, an appointment will be made to enter the building.

#### **VI. Music Ministry**

- A. ALL musical groups MUST practice COVID safety and follow these protocols.
- B. Adult Choir-
  - 1. The adult choir is currently not permitted to sing live during our worship celebrations.
  - 2. The Adult Choir is encouraged to continue to record themselves until they are permitted to sing live during the worship celebrations.
  - 3. The choir is permitted to meet periodically within the church building to record pieces for the worship when the weather prohibits recording outside. During this recording time—to take place in the sanctuary or fellowship hall—masks will be worn, choir members will be 6 feet apart, doors/windows will be open for ventilation and no more than 12 people will be singing for no more than 30 minutes.
- C. Bell Choir
  - 1. When the Bell Choir is comfortable they are permitted to play the bells live during a worship celebration
    - a) Face coverings must be worn
    - b) Social Distancing of 6 or more feet must be maintained for all people
  - 2. The Bell Choir is permitted to use the church building for recording themselves. When recording, face coverings and distanced at 6 feet apart must be maintained.
- D. Praise Band
  - 1. The Praise Band will sit on the blue chairs when not playing unless sitting with family in congregation.
  - 2. Social distancing of 6 or more feet must be maintained.

#### **VII. Miscellaneous items**

- A. Playground: The playground is to remain closed and locked. At this time only Learning Path Preschool is permitted to use the playground. This will be

reevaluated on a monthly basis by the Family Ministries Team. It will be locked because the church is currently not sanitizing the playground.

- B. The Sunday morning nursery will be closed. All children are invited to sit with their families during worship. This will be re-evaluated on a monthly basis by the Family Ministries Team.
- C. Children's Sunday School will not be meeting face to face at this time. This will be evaluated and decisions will be made before mid-August 2021 for the next season.
- D. Decisions pertaining to the formatting of our Sumer Camp (VBS) in August 2021 will be made by the Family Ministries team when we are closer to mid-Spring.