

Middletown United Methodist Church

CHURCH BUILDING REOPENING PROTOCOL

The Leadership Team has spent a great deal of time in prayer and careful consideration of the best way to reopen our church doors in a manner that is safe and controlled. 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. via the livestream at home.

Just as COVID is a living virus, this document is also a living document. The Leadership team appreciates your patience as things 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 Fellowship Hall. Our online worship experience will always continue. Anyone uncomfortable gathering for face-to-face worship is always invited to join us via the livestream. Please note that there are guidelines for Face-to-Face worship inside and outside.
- B. GUIDELINES FOR FACE-TO-FACE WORSHIP: INSIDE
 1. Fellowship Hall will is now opened for worship and will be used as an overflow area for 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 Fellowship Hall.
 3. PARKING LOT to CHURCH DOOR
 - a) "Welcome Team" members will be outside providing instructions and directing parking.
 - b) There will be signage with directions for parking: "PARK EVERY OTHER SPACE," "WAIT FOR THE 'WELCOME TEAM'S DIRECTIONS.'"
 - c) Traffic cones will be used to indicate where **not** to park.

- d) People will be asked to stay in their car until invited into the church.
 - e) Parking lot “Welcome Team” members will instruct people car by car to approach the church building to be certain people are not waiting in line or congregating as they are walking in.
 - f) Masks should be put on prior to exiting the car. If congregant did not bring a mask, one will be provided at the entrance.
 - g) Welcome sign posted at entrance: “WELCOME BACK/WEAR MASK/6 FEET APART/HAND SANITIZER AVAILABLE.”
 - h) Tape and/or sidewalk chalk will be used to indicate proper 6-foot distancing.
 - i) 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 directs all to sanitize hands, offers mask if they don’t have one and then directs 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, which will be marked out with family/group name.
 - f) If a congregant requests a bible or hymnal, the usher will provide one.
 - g) Communion Sunday - the elements will be individually wrapped and available for worshippers to pick up on their way in.
 - h) Offering plate will be at the entrance of the sanctuary.
 - i) Seating:
 - (1) FIRST PEW BEHIND THE PIANO WILL BE EMPTY
 - (2) Worship leadership (the band, etc.) will be sitting in the blue chairs on the worship platform.
 - (3) The seats behind the glass windows will be reserved for the ‘Welcome Team’ members
 - (4) No hymnals or bibles in pews. Worship will be BYOB. Bring your own bible, hymnal, and order of worship.
 - (5) Seating will be staggered such that 6 feet are observed in all directions between non-cohorted individuals
 - (6) Seating will be assigned
 - (a) So as to maintain social distancing and to best utilize space in the sanctuary

- (b) “Welcome Team” members at the entrance to the sanctuary will direct people to where their assigned seat is
- 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 FH.

6. SANCTUARY / SERVICE

- a) Main entrance door will be closed during worship and there will be a sign on the door: “Service in Progress - please wait for a Welcome Team member.”
- b) Pastor Derrick and Praise Band/ Music Ministry will be in position and ready for service; candles will already be lit.
- c) Praise band will be in place and observe 6 feet of distance while playing and sitting.
- d) 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).
- e) 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.
- f) Singing by the Congregation will not be permitted, at this time. Hymns and praise songs can be spoken.

- g) The Praise Band members must be spaced 6 feet apart and only 4 may sing at any given time, the others must wear a face covering. Maximum number for Praise Band is 5 people.

7. EXITING THE BUILDING

- a) Outside “Welcome Team” members will proceed to parking lot
- b) 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
- c) There will be an open trash can at exit for trash
- d) 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
- e) 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.
- f) Outside “Welcome Team” members will encourage people to move along to their cars.
- g) 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 days before cleaning the sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and bathrooms.
- e) Careful attention to “high touch” areas (bathrooms, wooden backrest of pews where people rest their hands, door handles, light switches, 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) “Welcome Team” members 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 Saturday 'Order of Worship' 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. FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM

- A. The following are the guidelines set forth by our Family Ministries Team (FMT) so that our Family, Children, Youth, and Young Adult Ministries shall continue to connect, grow, and share as we are beginning to reopen the Middletown UMC building:
 - 1. All activities and events are encouraged to continue to meet via ZOOM and other electronic platforms. For example, the Message Bag will continue on Wednesday afternoons at 4 pm via ZOOM.
 - 2. At this time no Family Ministries are to happen within any closed environments. For example: no activities are to happen within the church building.
 - 3. Family Ministries are encouraged to meet instead outside. The following are guidelines for all Family Ministries meeting outside:
 - a) Social distancing of 6 feet or more is required.
 - b) Hand sanitizer must be available for all participants.
 - c) No food or drinks will be provided. People can bring their own, but unfortunately at this time, they cannot share with others.
 - d) 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.
 - e) This would be a wonderful time to utilize the fire pit or any of our lawns.
 - f) The playground is to remain closed and locked. 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.
 - 4. 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.

5. Children's Sunday School will be evaluated and decisions will be made before mid-August.

III. STAFF PARISH RELATIONSHIP TEAM

- 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.

IV. SMALL GROUPS

- A. All small groups are encouraged to continue to meet electronically.
- B. At this time, no small groups are to be meeting in the church building or in someone's home
- C. Groups may decide to meet on the church property outside.
 1. Social distancing of 6 feet or more is required.
 2. Hand sanitizer must be available for all participants.
 3. No food or drinks will be provided. People can bring their own, but unfortunately at this time, they cannot share with others.
 4. If the church property is used, the bathrooms must be available. People will need to use hand sanitizer before and after entering the bathroom. The adult leaders will need to contact the church custodian before the event so that the bathrooms are properly cleaned after the event.
 5. This would be a wonderful time to utilize the fire pit or any of our lawns.
- D. Church Groups
 1. During the COVID19 crisis, church groups are able to use the church building while the preschool is not in session. All church groups using the building must practice social distancing and wear masks. All church groups are responsible for sanitizing the areas they have used including the bathrooms. If the group is 3 or less people classroom space is available. If the group is 4 or more people then the Fellowship Hall must be used. Only one group can use the Fellowship Hall at a time. All groups must schedule the use of the various rooms through the church office.
- E. Community Groups
 1. Out of an abundance of caution, during the COVID19 crisis, the difficult decision has been made that community groups are not able to use the church building. All community groups that the church has a relationship with have been contacted and we are trying the best we can to support their groups while they cannot use the building. Community groups are able to use the church grounds however the bathrooms are not available. Any community groups wanting to use the church grounds must schedule use through the church office.

**V. VISITORS TO CHURCH BUILDING DURING LEARNING
PATH PRESCHOOL HOURS**

- A. Currently, visitors (i.e.: parents, non-employees) will not be allowed to enter the building during the operating hours of our pre-school.
- B. 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.