

CONTINUING COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR FUMC

Updated May 9, 2022

As the COVID-19 pandemic wanes across the United States, the Trustees of First United Methodist Church feel it is time to relax more of the safety measures that we have had in place for the last two years.

It has been our practice at First United Methodist Church from the beginning of the pandemic to try to keep everyone at church as safe as possible, while at the same time continuing to be in ministry with our people, to make disciples for Jesus Christ, and to transform lives, the community, and the world with the love of God. We are grateful that the statistics on new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths indicate that we may take a more relaxed posture toward public health and safety.

While locally we are virtually free of COVID-19, the virus is not gone, nor is the pandemic over globally. We will continue to monitor the situation and adjust our activities such that they are in accordance with the recommendations of the CDC and of those being recommended by the Arkansas Conference. For now, the following policies are approved by the FUMC Board of Trustees for activities at the church.

ALL ACTIVITIES

- **Do not participate if**
 - you have a fever (100.4° or above),
 - feel sick,
 - have had contact with someone known to be positive for Covid-19 in the previous 5 days.

- **We encourage every eligible person to get vaccinated and boosted against the COVID-19 virus. You may participate whether or not you are vaccinated if you follow the safety precautions below.**

- **The following protocols apply:**
 - Masks are optional for those who are fully vaccinated. You may continue to wear one anywhere if you feel safer doing so.
 - Masks are recommended for all indoor gatherings if you are unvaccinated.
 - Masks are optional for children or youth participating in church activities.
 - Masks are not required for any outdoor activities.
 - Hand sanitizer will continue to be located at all entrances.
 - Food and drinks may be served in any gathering or location in the church. Potlucks, buffett serving, and open snacks are again acceptable.

IN-PERSON WORSHIP

- We will continue to have in-person worship on our regular schedule. The Sanctuary service will also be live-streamed on Facebook and Youtube and broadcast on the radio. The Connexion service will be broadcast at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday evenings. Both services will be available on Facebook sand Youtube for later viewing.
- Hymnals, offering plates, and attendance pads have returned to use in our in-person worship services. Electronic giving and automatic bank drafts will continue to be encouraged.
- Holy Communion will be served with bread and juice by the pastors and assistants.
- Worship spaces will be cleaned and sanitized after each use.

SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS

- Groups may reserve space at the church for class meetings, circles, studies, etc. Rooms will be assigned according to needs for appropriate spacing.
- Children and youth will meet in person, following the safety protocols of the church. Leaders of those ministries will communicate with their constituent groups.
- Child care will be provided for worship services, Sunday School, and special events, adhering to the Arkansas Department of Health safety guidelines for infants and toddlers.
- Meeting rooms will be cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Beverages and snacks may be brought in. The church can provide coffee and/or bottled water if requested.

OTHER GUIDELINES

- We will continue to monitor the local situation and guidance from the Annual Conference, State and CDC for guidelines regarding safety. Adjustments may be made as the situation warrants.
- The Board of Trustees of the church is responsible for approving these policies.
- The Weekday School and Child Enrichment Center will follow all Arkansas Department of Health guidelines for operating child-care facilities.

We pray that the disruptions of the pandemic are nearly over. While cases of COVID will remain with us, with vaccinations, better treatments, and reasonable safety measures, we hope our church will now enter a phase of revival and growth. We are thankful that our church has held fast and remained faithful through it all. Most of all, we are thankful to God, who is always faithful. We continue to pray for everyone to remain strong, patient, and healthy. We will come through this together and emerge on the other side wiser and more focused on the mission of the church. We appreciate your faithfulness during this challenging time. If you have any questions, please get in touch with one of the pastors or staff.

RESOURCES

- Arkansas Annual Conference guidance: <https://arumc.org/covid19>
- ADH guidance: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>
- CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Quarantine and Isolation guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1227-isolation-quarantine-guidance.html>