



Opening Plan and Protocol

As we prepare to phase back into in-person worship, the Leadership Team at First United Methodist Church, based on the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), as well as resources and guidance from the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church (many of these resources are listed below), has instituted the following policies:

Worship Services

We will continue to film our worship services and offer a livestream option indefinitely. These videos will be livestreamed to Facebook and made available on our website and YouTube channels as soon as possible after the worship services.

We strongly encourage anyone who is concerned about safety, those with underlying conditions, as those who are exhibiting symptoms of illness to stay home and engage with our worship services online.

In addition to the livestream service that will be broadcast on Sunday morning at 10:00am we will have a 30-minute condensed in-person service that will take place at 9:00am. If the 30-minute condensed gathering reaches 50 people, we will need to create another gathering opportunity to limit large groups.

Safety Precautions:

- Hand sanitizer will be provided at each entrance of the Sanctuary
- Pews will be blocked off in the sanctuary to demonstrate required physical distance of non-family attendees
- Balcony seating will be encouraged to ensure safe distance between parties

- Quality of air filters will be increased in Sanctuary and doors will be kept open during services to increase air circulation
- Masks will be required for all in person, inside gatherings
- Because of its extraordinarily high risk of transmission, there will be no congregational singing inside
- We will eliminate the greeting line
- We will not pass the offering plate. Rather, offerings can be placed in a stationary plate or sent via the website or through the mail
- We will not pass out bulletins. Instead, bulletins will be placed in each seat prior to the service and are to be taken out and thrown away
- We will minimize shared surfaces including hymnals and pew Bibles.
- We will incorporate the screen and projector to display scripture readings and other necessary info or worship elements

Singing:

- There is unfortunately a lot of research that has found congregational singing to be one of the most dangerous activities for the risk of spreading COVID-19. Therefore, we will be refraining from congregational singing in our in-person worship services inside. However, immediately following the close of the service, we will release folks to depart the sanctuary and sing a closing song together outside across the sidewalk, steps and/or at individuals' cars.
- Please find an article on the risks of group singing below: <https://www.oca.org/reflections/misc-authors/what-covid-19-means-for-singing-in-church>
- Obviously, we love to sing and so we will continue to seek out alternative means of gathering and singing like our Hymn Sing in the park so that we can find regular ways to sing safely together

Masks

- We will require the use of masks for all indoor worship gatherings to protect our most vulnerable community members
- We will have masks available for you if you forget to bring one
- Pastors and liturgists must wear masks except in the times that they are speaking

- We see this as an act of hospitality. Since we know that COVID-19 can be spread asymptotically, we wear the masks to protect our neighbors as well as ourselves.

Special services: Weddings and Funerals

- Must abide by the same protocols of in-person gatherings above
- Masks required, no congregational singing (can use a musician or a soloist), physical distancing
- Please refer to “Conference Small Gathering Precautions and Guidelines” link below

Office Staff & Visitors

- Office is open by appointment only. No drop ins to limit accidental overcrowding in a small space together. Please wear a mask when you enter to protect our high-risk staff which work in tight spaces.
- Staff is not required to wear masks when working at their desks in separate areas of the office (at least 6 feet apart).
- Staff meetings will be held outside as often as possible.
- If you must come into the office (money counters/check signers) we will have masks available if you forget yours.

Small Groups

- 10 or less folks should be in the group unless prior discussion takes place with the pastors and/or the leadership team
- Please observe social distancing and agree to no singing together inside
- Speak with your small group leader to determine how you’ll gather, either online or in person
- Please do not exceed a total of 7 people in the library, 12 in the Ware Classroom, 6 in the nursery and 20 in McKinley Hall
- All small groups must utilize disinfectant provided to wipe down used surfaces and door handles, as well as to wipe down door handles and light switches for restrooms used. All trash must be removed following the group’s use and placed in the outside dumpster.

Third Party groups

- We have been in conversation with the third party groups that meet on our campus. Several of the recovery groups have fewer than 5 people and have agreed to observe the guidelines listed above.
- Any new or additional third party group are required to be approved through facilities use forms and will be approved on a case by case basis determined by the ability to fully abide by these guidelines

Meals

- We will continue to host food distribution days on Friday (10a-12p) and Sunday (1p-3p) for those in our community in need of food assistance during this time. We ask that while in line, our guests observe 6 ft. of distance. All volunteers are required to wear masks and gloves during distribution. Hand sanitizer is available, and each guest receives food out of the alleyway doors without entering the building. The doors are propped open and surfaces are wiped down afterwards.
- Saturday Grace and Grits resumed its service on Saturday mornings. This will be done as a take away style with food being distributed out of the alleyway doors and no guests being allowed in the building.
- Wednesday evening and Sunday afternoon in person meals continue to be postponed indefinitely.

Resources and info:

State and County info

- Florida Department of Health (fdoh.org) Report by County: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/96dd742462124fa0b38ddedb9b25e429>
- Seminole County Emergency Management website : <http://seminolegis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/b2c25af87b9e460281ab0f160129d6ab>

Florida United Methodist Conference resource

- Guidance from Alex Shanks on why reopening a church is different: https://www.flumc.org/files/fileslibrary/covid19+related/why_reopening_a_church_is_different-rev_alex_shanks-5-18-2020.pdf
- Guidance from the Conference on reopening: <https://www.flumc.org/files/content/relaunch+guidelines+-+5-27-20.pdf>
- Conference Small Gatherings Precautions and Guidelines: <http://florida-email.brtapp.com/files/tables/emails/2602408/files/Small+Gathering+Precautions.pdf>
- Link to Dr. Southwick - Former Head of Infectious Diseases- UF Health (Shands) - Webinar on COVID-19: <https://vod-progressive.akamaized.net/exp=1592856322~acl=%2Fvimeo-prod-skyfire-std-us%2F01%2F697%2F17%2F428487401%2F1859633447.mp4~hmac=5747493f462e6afa3acd94881f9bd90908142cfb6e819148b8f6e15d864958bc/vimeo-prod-skyfire-std-us/01/697/17/428487401/1859633447.mp4?filename=COVID-19+zoom+webinar+6-11-20.mp4>