

Asbury United Methodist Church Reopening Plan for COVID-19

Dear Asbury Church Family,

A small group of church leadership (Admin Chair - Phil Spotts, Trustee Chair - Dale Gray, SPPRC Chair/Lay Leader - Kim Kinnear, Finance Chair - Darryl Boleratz, Admin Council Member at Large and Medical Professional - Dr. Chuck Durmis and Pastor Tori Heath) met together 2 times in the last month to discuss the possibility of reopening the church building. Our WPA Bishop asked us to not reopen UM churches until after June 1. At the first meeting (mid-May) we decided it was indeed best to continue virtual worship only. We met again on June 1 and decided to suggest to the larger Admin Council to begin the reopening process, taking into account proper state and denomination guidelines.

Our larger Admin Council met on June 4, 2020 and has voted that we reopen the church building for Sunday worship on Sunday, June 21, 2020. Reopening on this day will give us ample time to prepare the building and make sure we have enough disinfectant supplies. We would also like to suggest that smaller groups (Bible studies, support groups, etc) may begin meeting in the church building as of June 21, as well.

We acknowledge that there will be differing assumptions, opinions, and concerns about how and when to reopen. We realize that no matter when and how we reopen, there will be some disagreement. There seems to be no “right” answer, so we hope that Asbury’s leadership and congregation can be full of grace and understanding as we band together to figure out what’s best for our community. Only you can decide what is best for yourself and your family.

The plan below is the best plan we have for now, but may be subject to modifications and adjustments as we continue in this journey together.

We are asking those who are ill to stay home until recovered. If a close family member in the household has been ill, you are also asked to stay home. Those who are in “high-risk” categories are strongly encouraged to use caution in deciding when to return to in-person worship and meetings.

Blessings to you,

Asbury UMC Admin Council

OUR PLAN

WORSHIP

- ***There will be two Sunday services available: 11:00 am and 7:00 pm*** to give ample time for cleaning and disinfecting.
- We will keep attendance at each service to a ***maximum of 30 people***, spaced out in the sanctuary 6 feet apart.
- For the time being we will have a ***“reservation” system*** for those who would like to attend services. ***Please call the church office*** and let Stacey know which service you would like to attend.
 - ***Call in reservations may begin the Tuesday before each Sunday at the start of office hours (9:00 am) at (814) 796-6012*** and will go until the services are full. If you do not get an answer at the church office, please leave a message and Stacey will reserve spots in order of the messages left earliest to latest. Stacey will call you back to confirm your reservation. Reservations will ***not*** be made by email, as everyone does not have email.
- The pews will be marked off to make allowance for physical distancing of six feet. Family groups will be permitted to sit together but everyone else will be spaced out. It will be made obvious which pews are open for use.
- For the time being, ***masks will be required***. The pastor and worship leader will not have to wear masks when they are “up front” and leading worship. Congregants are asked to provide their own masks (but the church will provide disposable masks for those who show up without one).
- No bulletins will be distributed at the church. They will be emailed for people to print out or pull up on your phone. We will mail a hard copy each week to our homebound members who do not have email access.
- All Bibles, hymnals, and attendance pads will be removed from the sanctuary.
- For the time being we will not sing as a gathered community, but music will still be a part of worship.
- The offering will be collected via plates located at the sanctuary entrance at the start and end of the service. Plates will not be passed during worship. Offerings may also still be sent in via mail.
- Pastor Tori and the worship committee will come up with a safe way to celebrate communion for those in attendance (perhaps pre-packaged elements) at applicable times. They (and/or Nurture Committee) will also develop a plan to drop off communion to those who are uncomfortable/unable to be in physical worship.
 - Communion will most likely be available the first week of July.
- Congregants may bring with them their own printed bulletin, personal Bible, and water bottle. In this case, you also are asked to take them with you or put them in the trash when you leave.

ENTRANCE/EXIT PROCEDURES

- Doors will be posted with signage indicating the need for masks and any other relevant portions of this policy.
- All interior doors that can be propped open will be propped and remain open to limit the amount of touching of mutually handled surfaces.
- Greeters will be located near the main exterior doors but will engage in non-touch welcomes. They will be asked to spray hand sanitizer on the hands of those entering and leaving the church. Greeters will be asked to open the exterior doors for arriving persons, to limit all the touching of door handles.
- Attendance will be kept by a greeter (to assist with contact tracing, if necessary). This may be done with a sign in sheet or taking a picture of each attender.
- Greeters do not have to take temperatures of people entering the building, but will ask:
 - Have you been sick or had a fever in the last week?
 - Have you been around someone who has been sick or has had a fever in the last week?
 - If someone answers “yes” to either or both of these questions, the person will be asked to worship virtually from home.
- A greeter will assist in the sanctuary with social distancing in our seating plan. The same greeter will assist in dismissing pews at the end of the worship service, dismissing the front pews first and working backward.

FACILITY

- Some restrooms will remain open. We will limit the ones in use to the back of the sanctuary and the ones nearest to offices. All other restrooms will remain closed (to ease our cleaning needs).
- We will limit access during the summer months to the glass door entrance only (because it is handicapped accessible), to control cleaning needs. All other doors will be locked from outside but will still be able to be exited from inside in case of emergency. This will apply to outside groups as well (see below).
- The sanctuary, restrooms and other used spaces will be cleaned/disinfected after worship. This will include special attention to door handles, light switches, and other “high-touch” surfaces.
- Water fountains will be turned off or covered.
- We will not require temperature checks of those entering the building throughout the week.
- Outside groups (AA; Golden Agers; garden club) as well as family events hosted by church members (like birthday parties) will be directed to use the fellowship hall (instead of smaller rooms). The fellowship hall allows for better distancing and it's hard surfaces/chairs will be much easier to clean and sanitize.

- All groups will be provided instruction and supplies to clean their area when they are finished. Stacey will notify all groups of these new requirements. Custodian will review that this cleaning is being done.

PROGRAM

- There will be no children's message (or will be done without the children coming to the front of the sanctuary) or children's church until further notice.
- Penny collection - we will collect unwrapped coins on Sunday, June 28 that individuals drop into the coin bucket. The coin bucket will be next to the offering plate at the door of the sanctuary.
- There will be no choir or bell choir until September.
- We will continue to emphasize our virtual presence and encourage participation there. We plan to purchase equipment to aid with live streaming the services.
- We will limit volunteers to those who consider themselves healthy or not at risk.
- There will be no children's Sunday school until September, when school resumes (or subject to change).
- However, at this time, we are still planning on having VBS the first week of August.

CLEANING PROTOCOLS

- All areas that are "open" for Sunday worship (sanctuary, restrooms, lobbies and hallways) will be cleaned and disinfected/sanitized before their next usage.
- Church staff will coordinate room usage to ensure proper cleaning before next usage.
- "High touch" areas will be cleaned on a regularly scheduled basis determined by building/room usage. This will include handles, doorknobs, faucets, etc.
- Either wipes or towels may be used. If towels are used, the person doing the cleaning is asked to launder them at home and return them.
- Overall, we will need to pay better attention to building usage locations, times, and related items so that we can be thinking about cleaning as a primary, instead of secondary emphasis.

CDC Links for faith-based organizations:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fdisinfecting-building-facility.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/community-faith-based/faq.html>