



First United Methodist Church
504 Jackson Street
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For “Those who desire life and desire to see good days,
let them keep their tongues from evil
and their lips from speaking deceit;
let them turn away from evil and do good;
let them seek peace and pursue it.
For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their prayer. – 1 Peter 3.10-12a

May 23, 2020

Dear friends and family in Christ,

As I shared in my pastor’s page of the May-June Newsletter, I am firmly committed to living as fully as I am able the General Rules of our United Methodist Church. Again, they are very simple to understand, but a challenge every day to live into fully:

- First, do no harm.
- Second, do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, with all the people you can, as long as you ever can.
- Third, stay in love with God by keeping the various practices of faith, such as personal and corporate prayer and worship, Bible study, generosity, holy conversations, etc.

Believing that we must continue to keep at the forefront of all we do to “First, do no harm,” even when we begin to move forward with a return to in-person worship and other ministries and events, I have desired to see the development of a plan which will allow us to do so with **EVERYONE’S HEALTH AND SAFETY**, especially that of the most vulnerable among us, as our priority. Thus, I have been striving throughout the past two months to learn as much as I am able from both church and government sources, and I have participated in many conversations between our District Superintendent and the clergy of the Indiana District.

Our own church’s Safety Team has recently been meeting in order to develop a “COVID-19 Plan for Return”. You will find a chart outlining the details of our plan included with this letter. This plan was **affirmed and adopted unanimously** by our Safety Team, Board of Trustees, and Church Council last Thursday night (May 21st) at a joint meeting in our sanctuary, and I wanted to share the details with all of you as quickly as possible.

Even since Thursday evening, Governor Wolf has announced that our county, among others, will be entering the state’s “Green Phase” of COVID-19 response. While encouraged by this

change, I believe it is still in everyone's best interest to hold to the plan developed and adopted by our own church leaders.

Our plan will evolve in **3 PHASES**, and I will highlight here the main provisions of our plan and I **am delighted to announce** that we will begin implementing **PHASE 1** of this plan on **Sunday, June 7 at 10:45 AM**.

By now you should be well aware that throughout the past two months, we have been providing worship in an online format, live streaming on our church's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/firstumcreynoldsville/) at 10:45 am each Sunday morning. We will continue to provide this as a permanent part of this church's ministry every Sunday morning at 10:45.

Beginning on Sunday, June 7th, we are inviting **THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO ACCESS WORSHIP THROUGH THE ONLINE FORMAT** to join us in the sanctuary for this weekly worship service. Initially, this will be the only option for coming to church on Sunday mornings. Wendy Watt will be continuing to provide Sunday School via telephone on Sunday evenings at 6:30 pm [I will include the details for accessing this Sunday School class at the bottom of this letter]. As we begin **Phase 1** of our plan to **RETURN SAFELY** to worship, **we will be requiring all who come for worship to commit to participating** in a few simple procedures.

You will be asked to allow us to take your temperature using a non-contact thermometer at the door of the building. Those with a temperature reading higher than 100.6 F will be asked to return home. You will also be asked to provide some basic contact information so that we may have a contact record of all present each time we worship. If you choose to come for worship during Phases 1 and 2, please understand that you will be required to **WEAR A MASK WHICH FULLY COVERS YOUR MOUTH AND NOSE**. We will have masks available for you to use and keep if you happen to arrive without a mask. We are also asking everyone to practice good hand hygiene both before arriving and while at church. You will be asked to be seated in the sanctuary **ONLY IN THOSE SPACES DESIGNATED FOR SEATING** and to **SIT ONLY WITH THOSE WHO LIVE IN YOUR OWN HOUSEHOLD**. We will have seating for individuals, couples, and families marked and each "seating group" will be at least 6 feet from any other "seating group". **WHILE NOT REQUIRED**, we will have nitrile gloves available for those who would like to use them. Finally, throughout **Phases 1 and 2**, we ask that you refrain from shaking hands and hugging others.

We realize that this is a "big ask" for many, but both your church leadership team and I believe this is the best way for us to keep everyone safe and healthy, by doing no harm, as well as by doing all the good that we can.

When the leadership team and I agree that it is appropriate to move to **Phase 2**, we will do so by announcing a return to the 8:15 am worship service. Throughout **Phase 2**, we will continue to offer in-person gatherings only for these two worship services, and the church and sanctuary will be disinfected between the two services each week.

We are asking all those who are able to do so, to continue to participate in worship from home through the online service throughout **Phases 1 and 2**.

And once again, when both the church's leadership team and I agree that it is both safe and appropriate to do so, we will announce the implementation of **Phase 3**, which will be a return to something of a normal and full offering of worship, Sunday School, and other programs, events, and ministries with **ALL INVITED AND WELCOME TO RETURN**.

Please, **ALWAYS USE COMMON SENSE AND YOUR OWN DISCRETION** as to whether or not to attend any event, group, or meeting, at any time; not just during the current period of COVID-19 precautions. If you do not feel well, please stay home, for your and everyone else's health and safety.

Once again, I urge you to remember who you are and whose you are: you are the Beloved of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Be bold in faith, trusting the grace and love of God for you to be more than enough, more than sufficient for you, in each and every moment. As the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome:

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, be persistent in prayer.

By His Grace,

Pastor Tom

Enclosure

To access our weekly worship on Facebook Live, go to:
www.facebook.com/firstumcreynoldsville/ (Please make sure you are on our "Religious Organization" page, rather than our "Group Page". The image at the top of the page will be of the communion table). The live feed begins approximately 10 minutes before worship time, with the announcements slide show.

All of the weekly recordings may be found on our website page at:
www.fumcreynoldsville.org (Click on the "Streamed Worship Services" tab, and then choose the service you wish to view: services are listed by date).

To access the weekly telephone Sunday School class:
Dial 1-425-436-6531 and us Access Code 723440

COVID-19 Return Plan

Phase I

No return until at least June
Initial return will be 10:45 service only
(limit 25)
Folks who are able to worship "online"
encouraged to continue, even after the
return
10:45 service would be "open" for those
without the ability to worship "online"
(limit 25)
Hymnals, Bibles, Pencils, Offering
Envelopes and other papers removed
from pews
NO paper distributed (Bulletins or
otherwise)
Non-contact temperature readings taken at
doors, those with 100.7 F and above
sent home
Attendance with contact information taken
every week at the doors
Touchless hand sanitizer stations and
signage available
Spaced seating (6 ft. distance in all
directions)
Proper hand hygiene and hand sanitizer
usage encouraged
Face masks required for those coming to
worship (Cloth & Disposable available),
gloves (Disposable available)
encouraged
Offering boxes only (No passing of offering
plates)
No Handshakes or Hugs
No Coffee time
No Sunday School
No Communion
Folks exhibiting signs of illness to stay at
home

Phase II

8:15 and 10:45 Worship Services
provided [only 10:45 will be
broadcast online] (limit 25 each)
Folks who are able to worship "online"
encouraged to continue, even after
the return
Sanctuary and pews sanitized between
services
Both services would be "open" for those
without the ability to worship
"online" (limit 25 each)
Hymnals, Bibles, Pencils, Offering
Envelopes and other papers
removed from pews
NO paper distributed (Bulletins or
otherwise)
Non-contact temperature readings
taken at doors, those with 100.7 F
and above sent home
Attendance with contact information
taken every week at the doors
Touchless hand sanitizer stations and
signage available
Spaced seating (6 ft. distance in all
directions)
Proper hand hygiene and hand sanitizer
usage encouraged
Face masks required for those coming
to worship (Cloth & Disposable
available), gloves (Disposable
available) encouraged
Offering boxes only (No passing of
offering plates)
No Handshakes or Hugs
No Coffee time
No Sunday School
No Communion
Folks exhibiting signs of illness to stay
at home

Phase III

8:15 and 10:45 Worship Services
provided (only 10:45 will be
broadcast online)
Sunday School Returns at 9:30 AM
Breakfast/Coffee Returns at 9 AM
Return to other programs: Youth Group,
Bible Studies, Sharing Group, etc.
Folks encouraged to return to worship
and/or Sunday School as they feel
comfortable
Return to Normal Seating
Hymnals, Bibles, Pencils, Offering
Envelopes and other papers
returned to pews
Bulletins and other papers distributed
Non-contact temperature readings
taken at doors, those with 100.7 F
and above sent home
Attendance with contact information
taken every week at the doors
Touchless hand sanitizer stations and
signage available
Return to Normal Seating
Proper hand hygiene and hand sanitizer
usage encouraged
Disposable face masks & gloves
available
Offering boxes only
Return to Handshakes and/or Hugs
(optional)
No Shake/No Hugs tags or buttons will
be available
Return to Communion: every week at
8:15; at least quarterly at 10:45
Folks exhibiting signs of illness to stay
at home



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

PITTSBURGH EPISCOPAL AREA

CYNTHIA MOORE-KOIKOI
RESIDENT BISHOP

RENEE MIKELL
ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP

Dear Siblings in Christ,

In a statement issued Friday morning, President Trump asked governors to allow churches to reopen. Fortunately, at the beginning of his stay-at-home order, Governor Wolf designated churches, mosques, and temples as “life sustaining businesses”. Therefore, they could remain open with specific guidelines in place. Those guidelines were determined by whether the church, mosque, or temple was located in a county in the red, yellow, or green phase.

I am grateful for the fact that churches in Western Pennsylvania have been creative, continuing ministry and remaining “open” in spite of the fact that we could not meet in person in large gatherings.

Governor Wolf recently added some further guidance to his order. Religious organizations in the yellow phase, while not required to limit their gatherings to 25, are strongly encouraged to have no more than 25 people. The state health department guidelines also limit gatherings to no more than 25.

Our guidance to you remains the same. You must follow governmental laws and official health guidelines. Please continue to have conversations with your church leadership and your District Superintendent as you make decisions about how and when to reintegrate in-person worship to your ministry.

You can find our [reopening guidelines](#) and a video discussing our reasoning at wpaumc.org/covid-19-whats-next-for-churches

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi