

# UCC New Ulm, MN COVID 19 Public Service Guidelines

July 20, 2020

The following are the Guidelines for the limited return to public worship at the United Church of Christ in New Ulm, MN. These Guidelines are consistent with the guidance that has been issued by the Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith, and the UCC Conference Minister.

Indoor church services will not resume until the numbers of new COVID-19 cases in Minnesota and bordering states have continued to drop for 14 consecutive days.

This document contains the following sections:

- I. Worship Attendance
- II. Hygiene and Cleaning Church Spaces
- III. Church Service
- IV. Communication to Congregation
- V. Other Information

Appendix: Guidelines Checklist

## I. Worship Attendance

### **-Church Occupancy:**

- \* Face Masks are required. All members will be required to wear face masks while on the church premises and while in the church. Face masks will be provided if a member forgets to wear one. Children under 2 yrs. of age should not wear a face mask. Members who have difficulty wearing a face mask will be asked to not attend church services until masks are no longer required.
- \* Pews will be marked off so members do not sit within 6 ft. of each other (unless they are members of the same household living together).
- \* Church members will be asked questions pertaining to Covid 19 symptoms and possible exposure before entering the church.
- \* Each member will be assigned a pew letter and number of where they are to sit. Reasoning for the assigned seat is that if a member later tests positive for Covid 19, we will be able to identify and alert any members that were sitting close to that same area.

- \* Members will enter the church and follow the entrance arrows on the floor to enter into the sanctuary and find their assigned seats.
- \* Once the service is over, each pew will be exited one by one, always maintaining a 6ft. distance from other families. Members will follow the exit arrows in order to exit by specific marked doorways.

**-High Risk Individuals:**

- \* The majority of our members are over the age of 65yrs. Their age places them at increased risk of dying or having resulting chronic health problems should they catch the Covid 19 viral infection. While they may choose to attend church services, they will be reminded of their vulnerability to this virus.
- \* Members with a compromised health condition (obesity, cancer, heart diseases such as hypertension or cardiac arrhythmia, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, and lung diseases such as COPD, asthma or emphysema) will be strongly encouraged to not attend services. They are at a much higher risk of dying or developing lifelong complications. This is not only for their safety but also the safety of other members.
- \* Members who have had exposure to persons testing positive for Covid 19 must wait to attend church services for 3 weeks after that person has started to feel better.
- \* Members having symptoms of possible Covid 19 will not be allowed into the church.
- \* Members who have had Covid 19 must wait for 3 weeks after starting to feel better before they may attend church services.

## II. Hygiene and Cleaning of Church Spaces

**-Sanitation:**

- \* The entrance doors will be sanitized before and after each service. The doors will be propped open so that members will not need to touch the door handles upon entering and exiting.
- \* All light switches will be sanitized before and after each service. Members are asked to not touch any light switches.
- \* All bathrooms will be sanitized before and immediately after church services.
- \* Fans will not be turned on. If there is a member in attendance that unknowingly has the virus, the fans would circulate that virus around the room, thereby possibly infecting others.
- \* Documentation of all cleanings will be kept.

**-Hymnals:**

All hymnals, pencils, papers will be removed from the pews.

**-Offering Plates:**

Offering plates will not be passed from members to members. A basket will be placed at the door for offerings.

**-Hand Sanitizers:**

Hand sanitizers will be available at the entry and exit doors.

**-Disposable Gloves:**

An adequate supply of gloves will be available for those members who are sanitizing the church before and after each service.

**-Ventilation:**

- \* A HEPA filter will be placed in the air-conditioner/furnace.
- \* Windows will remain opened as weather permits. If the doors are open during the service, a church member will be assigned to stand by that door(s) to screen anyone arriving late.

**-Restroom Use:**

- \* Only the bathrooms at the 3<sup>rd</sup> St. entrance will be used.
- \* Only one person at a time will be allowed to enter each restroom.
- \* Others needing to use the occupied restroom will wait and stand on markers on the floor. These will be 6 ft. away from the bathroom entrances.

**-Pastor and Pianist:**

- \* The Pastor will wear a mask and gloves during the service. The gloves will be needed in order to handle the microphone. The pastor will maintain a 6ft. distance from the pianist and the church members.
- \* The Pianist will wear a mask and maintain a 6 ft. distance from the pastor and church members.

III. Church Service

**-Length of the church service:**

The entire service including piano music, readings and sermon will not exceed 30 minutes. This is to minimize the amount of time members are in the same space.

**-Speaking/Singing during the service:** Music will only be provided via a pianist. There will be no singing or speaking prayers out loud. Health experts

indicate that singing produces 6-10 times more droplets from our mouths than speaking does.

**-Bulletins/Hymnals:**

- \* There will be no bulletins or hymnals used to avoid any possible contamination.
- \* The service format will either be posted up on the screen or the pastor will announce as the service progresses.

**-Communion:**

- \* Communion Sunday (The first Sunday each month): The communion ceremony will either take the place of the sermon or readings, or the sermon and readings will be shortened in order to meet the 30 minute service exposure time.
- \* Each member will be asked to bring their own piece of bread, a cracker or a cookie as well as something to drink from home. These items will be blessed by the Pastor for communion. Again, this is to reduce the risk of contamination.
- \* If it is not possible for a member to bring items for communion or the items are forgotten, that member will still be considered as participating in the communion as they listen to the prayers and teachings of Holy Communion.
- \* Members will stay in their pews during the Holy Communion.
- \* Members will remove their masks to take communion but must put them back on immediately after drinking and eating.

IV. **Communication to Congregation**

**-Entrance:** Two church members will be assigned to work at the 3<sup>rd</sup> street church entrance. One will give out masks to church members who do not have one and the other will screen church members for Covid-19 symptoms.

**-Signage:** Signs will be posted concerning social distancing and sanitation requirements. Signs and other instructions will encourage normal safe practices necessary to stop the spread of the Covid 19 virus.

**-Protective Wear:** Members will be required to wear masks while on the church premises and in the church. Members may bring their own masks or one will be provided for them. Members may wear gloves if they so desire.

**-Socialization:**

- \* Members are to remain 6 feet apart unless they are living together.
- \* Members will be asked to greet each other without touching.
- \* Special attention will be given to children to make sure social distancing is practiced. Parents are encouraged to speak with their children before coming to church to let them know that things will be different.
- \* There will be no Fellowship time in the church before and after the service.

## V. Other Information

**-Baptisms:** If there is to be a baptism, that ceremony will take priority over the Bible readings and sermon. It may mean that the readings are shortened and/or the sermon is shortened. All the above is to maintain keeping room exposure to 30 minutes or less.

**-Funerals:**

- \* Families who have lost a loved one will be encouraged to have a graveside service with immediate family only attending.
- \* Those who wish to have an indoor, sanctuary service will be asked to hold off on that service until the Covid 19 Pandemic has ended.

**-Weddings:**

- \* There will be no indoor weddings in our church until the Covid 19 Pandemic has ended.
- \* Couples wishing to be married during the Pandemic are advised to have an outdoor wedding and to limit the number of attendees.

**-Note to Pastor and Council Members:**

- \* It is the responsibility of the Pastor and/or Council Members to oversee the implementation of these Guidelines and to determine when church services will resume. If the Pastor or the Council becomes aware of an immediate and imminent threat to the safety of the church members or determines the above-mentioned Guidelines cannot be observed or are not being observed, the services will be cancelled until the Guidelines can be and are being observed. Examples of this would be: There are not enough volunteers to clean before and after a service or church members are not observing the 6 ft. social distancing with masks on.
- \* It is the intent that these Guidelines create basic standards applicable to all settings. There may be changes made to these guidelines as more is learned about the Covid 19 virus and as the Pandemic spreads.

