



# New Beginnings United Methodist Church

Birmingham, Alabama • A Place of Possibilities and Transformation

## REOPENING POLICY

June 1, 2020

*\*The Reopening Policy is subject to change at the discretion of the Senior Pastor and the Board of Trustees.*

Jesus teaches his disciples in Matthew 22:38-39: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...and love your neighbor as yourself” (NIV). We anticipate with great joy our return to in-person worship services and activities; however, our desire to rush back into worship should not be harmful to others, especially our most vulnerable, and it should be done in such a way that we actually witness to our loving God.

The church will first consider the advice of the Bishop of the North Alabama Conference, the Governor of Alabama, and the Mayor of the City of Birmingham when determining the timeline of reopening. If either recommends closure, we will remain closed.

We are mindful that there may be people who do not feel comfortable returning to in-person worship services for various reasons at this time, including those with preexisting health conditions and those 65 and older. We encourage you to please stay home if you are feeling sick, showing signs of respiratory illness, or have a fever. Therefore, we will continue to offer other ways for you to stay connected to the life of the church. Some of those ways include the following: social media, conference calls, and video/audio recordings. Above all, we want to support you until you are ready to return to in-person worship services and gatherings.

### ***We anticipate the following gradual phase-in of worship services and activities:***

<b>Phase One</b> (Date: TBD)	At this point, worship gatherings of no more than 10 to include pastor(s), staff and volunteers who are essential to record/stream worship services. Masks and social-distancing requirements (6 feet between each person) will be in place. Other church gatherings must also adhere to the maximum capacity and social-distancing requirements of this phase.
<b>Phase Two</b> (Date: TBD)	At this point, worship gatherings of no more than 25 to include pastor(s), staff, volunteers who are essential to record/stream worship services, and Core Team members. Masks and social-distancing requirements (6 feet between each person) will be in place. Other church gatherings must also adhere to the maximum capacity and social-distancing requirements of this phase.
<b>Phase Three</b> (Date: TBD)	At this point, worship gatherings will include pastor(s), staff, volunteers who are essential to record/stream worship services, Core Team members, and additional worshippers. The church will consider offering multiple worship services. Mask will still be required with fewer social-distancing requirements as defined by our Bishop, governmental and medical authorities. Other church gatherings must also adhere to the maximum capacity and social-distancing requirements of this phase.
<b>Phase Four</b> (Date: TBD)	Our new normal with fewer restrictions as defined by our Bishop, governmental and medical authorities.

**Important Note: At any point during these phases the possibility exists for conditions to not improve or infections to actually increase. If that happens, the church will consider moving back to a previous phase.**

***We anticipate the following procedures and protocols for worship services and activities:***

1. The church will remain stocked with sanitizing products (e.g. Lysol wipes, hand sanitizer, disinfectant sprays, etc.) for daily cleaning. Special attention will be given to sanitizing the church building before and after Sunday morning worship services and gatherings. If there is still a widespread shortage of cleaning supplies, we will remain closed.
2. The church will remain stocked with face masks to distribute to the congregation upon entry into the church building. Those who refuse to comply with wearing a face mask will be asked to either put on a face mask or exit the church building.
3. In-person Sunday School classes, Children's Church, and Bible studies will remain suspended at reopening until further notice.
4. The Breakfast Ministry, Coffee Hour, church meals, and refreshments will be suspended at reopening until further notice.
5. Because of social-distancing requirements, the Van Ministry will be suspended until further notice.
6. No printed bulletins or other materials will be distributed to the congregation. We will utilize digital platforms for announcements and worship guides.
7. The Welcome Center and Fellowship Hall will be cleared of furniture, print materials, and other items to prevent people from gathering in the space to comply with social-distancing requirements at the time of reopening.
8. Sign-up sheets, pens, etc. will not be placed out. Sign-ups may take place by an individual approaching and collecting names which they record.
9. The church will not be actively promoting item donations upon initial reopening (e.g. school supplies, food products, etc.) until further notice.
10. The men's and women's restrooms will be closed until further notice. The unisex restroom will be available for emergencies only. There will be someone assigned to monitor and sanitize the restroom between usage.
11. Interior doors will be propped open as people are entering and exiting the church. Exterior doors will be cared for by one greeter who will frequently sanitize door handles and entryways.
12. The church office will be open only to essential staff (paid and volunteer) until further notice.

13. Classrooms, offices, the Conference Room, and Kitchen will remain locked when not in use until further notice.
14. Worship services and/or sermons will continue to be recorded/streamed online and via conference call.
15. There will be no passing of the peace that involves shaking hands in the worship service, but we will explore new ways to greet one another without close contact.
16. The offering will not be collected by passing offering plates, but the congregation will be invited to bring their offerings to a centralized location in the sanctuary until further notice. We will continue to make available several financial giving options: church website, text-to-give, mailing checks to the church office, and dropping off offerings on Sundays and Wednesdays between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
17. Communion elements will not be distributed by passing communion trays, but the pastor will work with communion stewards to determine the best practice until further notice.
18. We will only utilize the musicians and soloists at the time of reopening until further notice.
19. The pastor(s) and greeters will not gather in the Welcome Center to greet before or after worship services.
20. Because of social-distancing requirements, we will encourage the congregation to enter and exit the building in an orderly manner to discourage close contact.