

May 27, 2021

Congregants and Friends of St John's,

*Recent weeks have brought significant progress, both locally and nationally, in reducing cases, hospitalizations, and deaths due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Through mitigation measures, and ultimately vaccinations, no known cases of Covid were transmitted through participation in worship or congregational activities at St. John's – thanks be to God! **Thank you** for your patience and diligence in complying with the mitigation measures over the past 14 months. Your willingness to make personal sacrifices of love for the most vulnerable among us has been a powerful witness to the Lord we serve.*

We are all eager to take our next step forward in returning to the fullness of congregational life together. The Leadership Board has engaged in significant prayer, discussion, and research to ensure we do the best we can to worship our Lord faithfully and safely. The guidelines below are effective June 6, 2021; they will be reviewed regularly and adjusted as appropriate. We appreciate your continued prayers, flexibility, and understanding as we move forward.

Please read the information in this letter carefully as there are many important details required for participation at in-person worship and activities. Please continue to keep these plans, the St. John's Family, and our community in your prayers as we seek to faithfully extend open arms and serving hands such that lives are transformed by Christ.

The St. John's Leadership Board

1. Reservations to attend worship are no longer required.

- a. Half of the Sanctuary/Fellowship Hall will be open seating without distancing; the opposite half will continue to maintain distancing.
- b. Seating in the Choir Loft will be reserved for our A/V volunteers and their families, and for Choir members who are singing.
- c. Ushers will be available to answer questions and help guide you to seats.
- d. The 9am worship service will continue to be filmed and posted on our website later in the day.

- 2. A mask or clear face shield which fully covers the mouth will be required upon entering our facility, including for worship, at this time.**
 - a. For small group gatherings and meetings where all attendees are vaccinated, the group can determine within their gathering if masks are required. Leaders are asked to take into consideration all in their group. as the decision is made such that as many as possible can participate.
 - b. Partaking in food and beverages in meetings and small group settings is at the discretion of the leaders in consultation with their group.

- 3. Congregational singing will resume in worship services. Aspects of worship that require close contact (collection of offerings, Passing of the Peace) will remain distanced at this time.**
 - a. Communion will continue to be offered in prepackaged, sealed cups
 - b. Bibles and hymnals will be returned to the pews.
 - c. Bulletins will not be available/distributed at worship at this time. You will continue to receive the Order of Worship by email on the Friday before the worship service; please print this at home and bring with you if you want to have a paper guide at worship.

- 4. Every offering given, during the Covid crisis and at all times, is greatly appreciated.**
 - a. Collection plates are in the narthex (9am) and at the entrance to Fellowship Hall (10:30am)
 - b. Please use automated giving as a safe giving method or mail in your offerings to the church office

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP!

- 5. Adult Bible Studies, Small Groups, Circles, etc. are welcome to meet in-person, indoors or outside. Children and Youth activities will be held outside at this time.**
 - a. Indoor: prior to first meeting, contact the Pastor or Leadership Board via email/writing with a general plan for approval. Groups currently meeting are considered approved.
 - b. Outside: Pre-approval not needed; groups are advised to contact the office to ensure other activities are not scheduled.
 - c. Children/Youth: Future plans for expanded indoor activities, Sunday School, etc. will be approved by the Leadership Board prior to implementation.
 - d. Groups are encouraged to continue to offer virtual Christian education options if possible.

- 6. The kitchen may be used with pre-authorization from the Leadership Board.**
 - a. A detailed plan should be submitted in writing/via email to the Pastor and will be forwarded to the LB for approval.
 - b. Thorough cleaning of all areas used will be required.

- 7. Currently, and until further notice:**
 - a. There will be no Grace Café.
 - b. There will be no nursery coverage during worship. Families attending significant events (Baptisms, etc.) may make use of the nursery room as needed provided they wipe down any toys used.

- 8. Your attendance at any St. John's activity signifies your acceptance of the Covid Legal Liability waiver.**
 - a. St John's is doing everything reasonable and practical to ensure the safety and health of you, your family and friends, and the staff.
 - b. This waiver only protects the church, staff, and volunteers from liability in the unlikely event you do get infected.
 - c. The waiver is attached at the end of this letter.

- 9. As a reminder, please do not attend any activity at St. John's if you do not feel in your usual state of health or have any symptoms of Covid recognized by the Centers for Disease Control:**
 - a. Fever or chills
 - b. Cough
 - c. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - d. Fatigue
 - e. Muscle or body aches
 - f. Headache
 - g. New loss of taste or smell
 - h. Sore throat
 - i. Congestion or runny nose
 - j. Nausea or vomiting
 - k. Diarrhea

**ASSUMPTION OF THE RISK AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY RELATING TO
CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19**

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is extremely contagious and is believed to spread mainly from person-to-person contact. As a result, federal, state, and local governments and federal and state health agencies recommend social distancing and have, at various times in many locations, prohibited the congregation of groups of people.

St. John’s United Methodist Church has put in place preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19; however, St. John’s cannot guarantee that you or your children will not become infected with COVID-19 while present in our facilities. Further, your and your children’s presence in church facilities could increase your risk and your children’s risk of contracting COVID-19.

By attending in-person worship services at St. John’s, I acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19 and voluntarily assume the risk that my children and I may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 by being present in church facilities and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, and death. I understand that the risk of becoming exposed to or infected by COVID-19 at St. John’s may result from the actions, omissions, or negligence of myself and others, including, but not limited to, Church employees, volunteers, members, attendees and others present in Church facilities.

In consideration for being permitted to use St John’s facilities, I voluntarily agree to assume all of the foregoing risks and accept sole responsibility for any injury to my children or myself (including, but not limited to, personal injury, disability, and death), illness, damage, loss, claim, liability, or expense, of any kind, that I or my children may experience or incur in connection with our presence in church facilities (“claims”). On my behalf, and on behalf of my children, I hereby release, covenant not to sue, discharge, and hold harmless the church, its employees, trustees, volunteers, members, agents, and representatives, of and from the claims, including all liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs or expenses of any kind arising out of or relating thereto. I understand and agree that this release includes any claims based on the actions, omissions, or negligence of the church, its employees, trustees, volunteers, members, agents, and representatives, whether a Covid-19 infection occurs before, during, or after our presence in church facilities.

Signature: **By attending St John’s in-person worship you accept this agreement**

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____