



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IN MADISON, NEW JERSEY

UMC REOPENING PLAN IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS

**Health Protocols Approved: Tuesday May 25, 2021
by UMC Madison Church Council**

**March-May 2021: Drafted by Re-Opening Team
(Revisions Con't)**

Table of Contents

Pg 2.	UMC REOPENING PLAN <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- MEMBERS OF REOPENING TEAM-- CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED-- SUMMER WORSHIP FOR IN-PERSON & DIGITAL-- FALL WORSHIP FOR IN-PERSON & DIGITAL
Pg 6.	COVID-19 GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES FOR GATHERING
Pg 6.	-- INDOOR PROCEDURES FOR WORSHIP IN PERSON
Pg 9.	-- WORSHIP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS
Pg 10.	-- OUTDOOR PROCEDURES FOR WORSHIP IN-PERSON
Pg 11.	-- WEEKLY ACTIVITIES PROCEDURES

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

UMC MADISON 2021 Re-Opening Plan for Resuming In-Person Worship & Activities

The re-opening team, composed of the following individuals, identified these key challenges that need to be addressed in order to resume all activities at UMC Madison strategically and safely for the well-being of the whole worshipping community.

Reopening Team members:

Jeanne & Soren - Co-council chairs
Donna Conley - SPRC chair
Mac - Trustee Rep & Treasurer
Noreen - Finance Chair
Maria - Acorn Executive Board Chair
Rory - Technology Team
Kathleen - Staff representative
Daniel - Staff representative
Lisa Carballo - Lay Rep to Staff Meeting & Worship Coordinator

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT CHALLENGES

****BLACK - INITIAL FINDINGS IN MARCH***

****RED - UPDATED IN MAY***

SAFETY: Statistical data indicates that numbers in Morris County are rising. Vaccines will not be widely accessible until May with vaccine availability and distribution likely running into June/July.
[<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/new-jersey-coronavirus-cases.html>]

[MAY UPDATE: Statistical data indicate that numbers in Morris County are falling from March 2021 when the re-opening team first met. Additionally, about 51% of the county has been vaccinated. This is good news! The CDC is now recommending that people who have been fully vaccinated can resume activities without masks or social distancing. However, they continue to stress that if you haven't been vaccinated, you are still at risk for infection and spread. Additionally, variant strains of the virus and COVID-19's somewhat unpredictable nature may create conditions for returning to certain restrictions.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

IN-PERSON/DIGITAL NEEDS: Some members of our congregation are vaccinated and would like opportunities for in-person worship, while others will not come back when we resume right away for a variety of different reasons. Additionally, we are seeing people worship with us digitally that do not have the ability to worship with us in person. This widens our reach. Therefore, we need to offer quality digital and in-person worship experiences through the summer.

[MAY UPDATE: I have received reports from congregants who will be returning for summer worship, and from others who will be waiting until the fall. Therefore our need for digital worship, as we have been offering it, remains important. Additionally, the staff and technology team are working to determine how many are worshipping with us digitally and what it may require from us missionally if we expand our reach.

STAFFING: The worship staff has lost two critical roles this year, and two interns will be lost at the beginning of May. The SPRC is currently looking to fill one in May/June, and Pastor Kate is working toward procuring an intern for the Fall 2021.

[MAY UPDATE: The SPRC has hired a student Associate Pastor to begin with us on June 13. Pastor Kate is working with Drew University to procure an intern for the fall/spring.]

WORSHIP PLAN & PROCESS: The staff need to develop a summer/fall worship plan that addresses the needs of our entire worshipping body, as well as some time to set up, test out, and assess various processes for effectiveness.

[MAY UPDATE: Daniel, Pastor Kate, and the tech team are working over the summer to determine what the needs are for continuing digital ministry into the fall 2021 and beyond. Daniel and Rory have begun drafting a three-year plan to improve our digital presence, including livestream capabilities, outdoor broadcasting, audio improvements, and more]

VOLUNTEERS: We need to recruit and train willing volunteers who will be able to help with in-person and digital worship, as well as other ministries of the church in order to come back to full capacity. Despite that the church building has been closed, church ministry has been active weekly since the pandemic started. The staff have taken on more work, volunteering has waned, and in order to continue to address challenges, we will need the help of staff and laity working together.

**** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.**

[UPDATE: Daniel, Pastor Kate, Natalie, and the tech team will be working over the summer to determine volunteers needs and capacity for returning to weekly in-person & digital worship]

Given these challenges, the Re-opening team has created an incremental plan for re-opening that will give time to address challenges, while working to re-open the church to all functions safely and in the next three months.

WORSHIP PLAN FOR IN-PERSON/DIGITAL SUNDAY WORSHIP: LATE SPRING/SUMMER 2021

IN-PERSON SUNDAY WORSHIP

- Beginning May 30, UMC Madison will resume in-person worship on an every other week basis through August. We will *begin* in-person worship in the sanctuary in June, once our indoor procedures are approved by the Church Council.
- Beginning Kick Off Sunday September 12, UMC Madison will have a goal to resume in-person worship weekly in the sanctuary at 10AM.
- Schedule for In-Person Worship Dates
 - May 30 @ 10AM - Memorial Day & Pentecost
 - June 13 @ 10AM - Commemorate 150 Years at UMC Madison (INDOOR)
 - June 27 @ 10AM - (INDOOR)
 - July 11 @ 10AM - (INDOOR w/ Communion)
 - July 25 @ 10AM - (INDOOR)
 - August 8 @ 10AM - (INDOOR)
 - August 22 @ 10AM - (INDOOR w/ Communion)

DIGITAL WORSHIP PLAN

- We will offer an abbreviated digital worship experience on weeks that we will be meeting in-person over the summer. It will be sent to emails at 8AM on Sundays.
- On weeks when we are not meeting in person, a full Digital Worship experience will be the primary opportunity for worship. It will be emailed on Sundays @ 8AM.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

WORSHIP PLAN FOR IN-PERSON/DIGITAL SUNDAY WORSHIP: FALL 2021

IN-PERSON WORSHIP PLAN

- Worship will be held weekly in the sanctuary @ 10AM with the intention to livestream the service for anyone who is unable to worship with us in-person.
- NOTE: At this time, given the need for a digital and in-person presence with limited staffing capacity and enormous change, we will hold off resuming a second worship service time on Sundays through December 2021. In 2022, we will assess the need for a second in-person worship time on Sunday mornings.

DIGITAL WORSHIP PLAN

- Livestream in-person worship on Sunday mornings at 10AM.
- The staff will be exploring the potential of offering additional digital worship experiences at an alternative time throughout the week.
- Daniel and the technology team are working on a 3-year plan for digital worship and technology at the church to be presented to the Church Council at some point in the fall.
-

***** MAIN PRIORITIES FOR THE STAFF & VOLUNTEERS THROUGH SUMMER 2021**

- Create, implement, & assess appropriate health & safety procedures for in-person worship.
- Implement sanctuary livestream & Facebook livestream capabilities.
- Recruit volunteers & hire staff for worship leadership, technology, and safety monitoring.
- Construct a worship plan that seeks to meet the needs of those worshipping in both the in-person and digital space.

*** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.*

COVID-19 GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES FOR GATHERING

These guidelines apply to all individuals, groups, and gatherings meeting in or using the church building. The guidelines were created by members of the re-opening task force, approved by the Church Council and remain in effect until revised or rescinded. Guideline revisions will be done in alignment with NJ state mandates and executive orders.

INDOOR WORSHIP IN SANCTUARY PROCEDURES

PRIOR TO WORSHIP

- Congregants will receive an opportunity to sign up for worship through Sign Up Genius at least 2 weeks in advance of the in-person worship date.
- Congregants will receive a weekly email with worship health procedures to follow in their Monday email blast prior to worship in-person on Sunday.

ARRIVING AT CHURCH

- Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or resides with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days must NOT attend church. This applies to those who experience COVID-19 symptoms, like shortness of breath, fever of 100.4 or higher, cough, sore throat, or stuffy nose.
- People with chronic or major health conditions or disabilities should consult the Pastor before attending if they have any concerns. People with temporary illnesses, like a cold, should not attend until fully recovered.
- Those ages 65 or older who may have underlying health conditions or remain unvaccinated are encouraged to use their best judgment on whether to attend worship. We encourage you to wear masks and sanitize hands often should you choose to attend.
- When parking in the church lot, please reserve the parking spots in front of Building 22 and the closest row of parking spots in the lot for those with mobility issues and special needs. Maintaining social distance when walking from the vehicle to the front entrance is encouraged.
- All entry to the church will occur through the driveway side door and the front entrance to the sanctuary. Other doors will remain locked. Doors will be propped open prior to the start of worship to limit door knob touching. One greeter will be at each door to offer masks and hand sanitizer to guests, and to provide general assistance.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

--Individuals are welcome to use face shields or take other additional protective measures. However, the church will supply only masks and sanitizer to all guests.

-- The number of people attending worship services or any other assembly in the church is limited to what is authorized by the Executive Order of the Governor of New Jersey.

IN THE SANCTUARY

-- We are encouraging individuals to maintain social distance between themselves and others. We are also encouraging face masks to those who feel more comfortable wearing them, have pre-existing conditions, or are unvaccinated.

-- All staff have agreed to mask and practice social distance in an effort to create a welcoming space for both those who are vaccinated and those who are not vaccinated.

-- In warm weather, fans will be on and windows and doors to the sanctuary will be propped open.

-- To facilitate social distancing, alternate pews beginning with the first pew from the front on each side will be roped/taped off and these will be closed. Each person (or family group) should maintain maximum distance between persons to the front, back, and sides of them. If social distancing is not possible, the person/family unit should move to another open few. Family units can sit together.

-- Through the summer, to ensure a high degree of cleanliness throughout the building, those attending worship are confined to the sanctuary, front and side hallways, and the bathrooms.

-- Offering plates will be placed at both the side and front entrance of the sanctuary. Designated individuals will person the offering count each week.

-- Limited bulletins will be printed for people with poor eyesight or must have a bulletin for their worship use. These will be put at the end of the pews prior to the worship service for guests. We will be heavily relying upon the powerpoint for the order of worship and music to limit contact between individuals.

-- All non-essential items will be removed from the narthex and pews to avoid additional contact.

-- We continue to encourage guests to refrain from physical contact between persons (other than immediate family members and those you know are vaccinated). This includes handshakes, hugs, elbow bumps, and other forms of physical greetings.

-- Only one person may stand in the pulpit or lectern at a time. The preacher will remove their mask only when preaching and speaking. All speakers will come no closer to the congregation than the altar steps when preaching, reading scripture, or addressing the congregation.

-- Communion will be offered once per month through use of the following procedures:

- Distribution of individually packaged communion wafers and cups will be done by two greeters. They will wear masks and gloves to distribute to the congregation. Congregants will

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

be asked NOT to reach into the basket to pull out their own communion elements. The greeter will hand each family unit/individual the elements.

-- PLEASE NOTE: While we welcome children, we regret that childcare will not be provided during the worship service at this time. This will be reassessed in the coming months.

-- PLEASE NOTE: Children's church will meet in May and June. They will not meet over the summer. Fall plans will be assessed and communicated for Fall 2021 and onward.

-- Indoor congregational singing will be encouraged, but we are asking anyone who is not comfortable or not vaccinated to remain masked and refrain from singing. While we recognize that we cannot control how people will choose to worship, we do urge guests to consider the potential risk posed to neighbors around them, especially those who are unvaccinated.

-- Vocal or instrumental soloists will socially distance themselves from organist and congregation.

-- The choir will continue to practice and offer performances digitally to be shared during in-person and digital worship experiences. In-person performances will resume in discussion with the Director of Music.

-- Because it is not possible to clean bathrooms between each use, please keep use to a minimum. Each bathroom will be stocked with sanitizer. The sexton will ensure that each bathroom is supplied with sanitizer and wipes before the start of each worship service.

-- Upon the conclusion of the worship service, please exit the building out the front sanctuary doors, or the side entrance to the parking lot only and maintain social distance as you return to your vehicles or attend fellowship hour.

FELLOWSHIP

-- We will host a fellowship hour when we meet in-person for worship, if weather permits.

-- Over the summer, fellowship hour will be hosted outside as is our tradition. Food and coffee will not be offered, but guests are invited to bring their own to enjoy and to safely connect with one another.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

WORSHIP VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

****A majority of the staff are vaccinated. However, we are committing to wear masks to encourage those who need them to also wear them.*

****We are encouraging volunteers to consider joining the staff by wearing masks and regularly sanitizing hands, especially if you come into regular contact with worshippers.*

GREETERS

1. Greeters are asked to show up at the church at 9:40AM. There will be two. One will be stationed at the front door and one will be stationed at the side door. We encourage greeters to be masked and sanitize their hands regularly to set the tone for those who may be unvaccinated.
2. Greeters will ensure the following things:
 - a. Each guest is welcomed warmly.
 - b. Each guest is invited to use hand sanitizer and will be offered a mask if they don't have one and would like one.
 - c. Each guest is invited to find their bulletins already located at the ends of the church pews for their reference, or they can follow along with the service via the powerpoint.
3. On communion Sundays (once/month), greeters will be given the opportunity to help distribute communion to guests. Individual cups/wafers will be passed out by greeters. Greeters will be asked to use hand sanitizer/gloves and masks while distributing.

READERS

IN-PERSON:

1. Readers will receive the scripture readings one week in advance of their scheduled Sunday in order to practice it.
2. Readers will be asked to mask, use hand sanitizer, and maintain social distance, if they are not vaccinated.

DIGITAL:

1. Readers will receive scripture readings and the order of worship 1.5-2 weeks in advance of their scheduled Sunday.
2. Readers will record their reading on a device of their choice (ie. iPad/tablet, cell phone, computer) and follow instructions for how to upload to dropbox that Rory will send.
3. Videos should be recorded horizontally and shot with a resolution of 1080p, if possible.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

UMC MADISON OUTDOOR WORSHIP PROCEDURES

WORSHIP

- Upon arriving in the parking lot, each car will pass a check-in table. Volunteer greeters will offer sanitizer and masks for those who may want them.
- Congregants should not attend if they have experienced COVID-19 symptoms at any time in the past two weeks. A list of symptoms should be sent to everyone prior to the event.
- Congregants are invited **to bring their own chairs**; some will be on hand for those who do not have any with them.
- Congregants will be invited to sing outside. We are encouraging people to maintain safe distance from one another, especially those who have not been vaccinated.
- We are asking all congregants to respect the personal decisions individuals make to maintain social distance or wear a mask. Everyone will make a different decision that reflects their comfort level and health conditions.

VOLUNTEERS & STAFF

- A majority of the staff are vaccinated. However, we are committing to wear masks to encourage those who need them to also wear them.
- We are encouraging volunteers to consider joining the staff by wearing masks and regularly sanitizing hands, especially if you come into regular contact with worshippers.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR

- Format will include use of picnic tables and grassy area behind Building #22.
- People will be invited to bring their own coffee in travel mugs and snacks. We will not be offering these through the summer. To be reassessed in the Fall 2021.
- Chairs will be wiped down before and after the event.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES PROCEDURES

MEETINGS/ADULT SMALL GROUP STUDIES

-- At the present time, we are encouraging meetings and small group studies to be conducted by electronic means. If an in-person meeting is necessary, the same principles of parking, social distancing and masks are encouraged. Additionally, any in-person meetings that are scheduled are encouraged to be hosted in Building 22 at the present time. If there is a presenting conflict, the committee chairperson or leader of the meeting must speak with the pastor.

-- For programming needs, the pastor will work with small group leaders and attendees to determine the best practices for meeting in-person and/or digitally to ensure safety, spiritual formation, and fellowship needs.

OUTSIDE GROUPS

-- All outside groups using the church building must abide by these same guidelines, subject to adjustment for needs particular to the group or safety concerns. As needed, the pastor, and representatives of the staff, church council, or Trustees will meet with the outside groups to discuss their implementation of these guidelines. All outside groups using the church space must be reviewed by the pastor, the Church Council, and the Trustees before use is granted.

SPECIAL EVENTS

-- All special events using the church building must abide by these same guidelines, subject to adjustment for needs particular to the group or safety concerns. As needed, the pastor, and representatives of the staff, church council, or Trustees will meet with those coordinating the special event to discuss their implementation of these guidelines. All special events requests must be reviewed by the pastor, the Church Council, and the Trustees before use is granted.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH & YOUTH ACTIVITIES -

- SUMMER VBS: Mid-week outdoor gatherings in the summer may be scheduled and are subject to COVID numbers, vaccination distributions of staff and volunteers, and the ability to social distance according to CDC Guidelines for children. TBD.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***

- CHILDREN'S CHURCH: Fall plans for children's church will be subject to COVID numbers, vaccination distributions of staff and volunteers, and the ability to social distance according to CDC Guidelines for children. TBD.
- WEEKLY ACTIVITIES: We will continue to host a midweek Zoom gathering with the children each week, as it has been very successful in meeting the needs of busy families and finding them ways to connect more conveniently.
- CONFIRMATION: Currently, we are anticipating that confirmation will be held in the fall. We will assess the format for an in-person, virtual, or hybrid gathering experience based upon the needs of families, staff, and volunteers, as well as appropriate safety precautions.

COMMUNICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

- Copies of these guidelines will be sent via email, or U.S Mail to all members and friends of the congregation.
- Copies of these guidelines will be posted on all bulletin doors in the narthex and side hallways before each worship service for visitors who would like a copy.
- A copy of these guidelines will be posted on the church website.
- Appropriate signage for social distancing will be posted in the sanctuary and elsewhere as required.

***** All of these plans are subject to review and contingent upon NJ mandates, number of COVID infections in Morris County, and no infectious outbreaks at in-person church gatherings. If any of these become an issue, the plan will be revisited and revised to meet the presenting needs.***