

# St. John's United Methodist Church



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[sjum.org](http://sjum.org)

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June 2, 2020

Dear Friend in the Faith,

The current reopening of local businesses and establishments leads to the natural question, “When will St. John’s Church reopen in-person worship?” Bishop Ken Carter and the leadership of the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church have provided excellent guidance for churches. In addition, St. John’s Church Council established a “Reopening Subcommittee” that met over the past 4 weeks to provide the plan described below that has been approved by the Church Council. **The current schedule is to start in-person worship on June 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:45 am in a blended service.**

In a recent survey of the congregation, 50 - 60% of year-round residents indicated that they would return to worship this summer if social distancing measures were taken. Since our average worship attendance last summer was only about 180 people per Sunday, we are expecting an attendance of around 90 – 110 people per Sunday this summer.

The Florida Conference recommends that re-opening churches only use 25% of their seating capacity to provide space for 6-feet of social distancing between families. The Sanctuary has a capacity of seating over 400 persons comfortably, including our Overflow Room. Therefore, we can safely seat 90 – 110 people in our Sanctuary area and still maintain the recommended social distancing.

For at least 8 weeks following June 21<sup>st</sup>, we will take the following pandemic re-opening precautions:

- We will thoroughly clean the Sanctuary and CLC using Orchid Cleaning Service before and after each service. Our high standards for cleanliness and sanitation are the reason for going down to one service for 8 weeks. It would be very difficult to pull a cleaning crew together between multiple services in order to clean properly and thoroughly.
- Hand-sanitizers will be available in several stations around the Sanctuary building near the entrances and their use will be mandatory for entrance to the building.
- Greeters will open the door to minimize contact with door surfaces for attendees and direct attendees to the hand sanitizer at their location.
- St. John’s will ask you to indicate your desire to attend in person by filling out a form online via email or calling the church office at 863-324-6347.
- Sanctuary attendance will be capped at 110 people. If you do not sign-up ahead of time, we cannot guarantee you seating in the sanctuary.
- The church leadership and I highly encourage you to wear a mask to worship but it is not mandatory.
- Worship bulletins will continue to be online at [stjohnswv.com/bulletin](http://stjohnswv.com/bulletin).

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- No hymnals, Bibles, or other items will be in the pew racks.
- Offerings should be placed in one of four designated giving boxes as you enter or exit worship
- Music will be offered, but you should only sing if the Spirit leads you to do so. Congregational singing is not recommended at this time.
- Children under age 11 are encouraged to worship in Children's Church in Wesley Hall. Children's Church will last for the duration of the 9:45 am blended service. Nursery for children age 4 and under will also be available.
- Communion will be offered in self-contained cups on July 5 and August 2 with servers wearing gloves and masks, serving these cups with tongs by walking around the sanctuary.
- Sunday school classes and small groups are welcome to schedule meeting times before or after the one worship service during the summer. Proper social distancing of 6-feet between people should be observed for those classes that choose to meet.
- We will continue to offer online worship each Sunday at 9:45 am on Facebook Live and YouTube Live well into the future, and realize many of you will take advantage of this worship option.

Access to live streaming of the church services will be available at the following links, **beginning June 21st**:

<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnswinterhaven/live>

<https://bit.ly/youtubestjohnslive>

sjum.org and click "Sermons" tab

**On Sundays, June 7<sup>th</sup> and June 14<sup>th</sup>**, worship is available through the following options:

8:30 am drive-in service in the round-about in front of the Sanctuary steps

8:30 am and 11:00 am pre-recorded service on Vimeo, YouTube, and Facebook

[vimeo.com/daverill](https://vimeo.com/daverill) , [facebook.com/stjohnswinterhaven/videos](https://facebook.com/stjohnswinterhaven/videos), and [bit.ly/youtubestjohns](https://bit.ly/youtubestjohns)

9:45 am prayer service by phone at 863-535-4643

We deeply miss seeing all of you! We know that all of us want to safely move past this season and enjoy the physical presence of friends and family. Our decision to delay in-person gatherings until after June 15<sup>th</sup> is based on our faith commitment as Christians to care for our neighbors, honoring the most vulnerable among us. In a nutshell, our first general rule in the Methodist/ Wesleyan tradition is to "Do no harm."

God's Church is resilient, and always has been. Think about the early Christians who worshipped underground in the catacombs. A global pandemic has caused the Church to reevaluate and adapt everything we do. Our reopening decisions will speak volumes to the local community. We want our community to know they can still trust that St. John's has their best interest and health in mind. We are confident that taking additional time to reopen in-person gatherings in a way that is safe, considerate, and faithful will build trust within our congregation, and in our local community. In doing so, we will show we serve a God who cares for and values everyone

Adjustments will likely be made to this plan based on ongoing circumstances. We appreciate your patience and understanding. We as church leaders will strive to communicate clearly and often about our plans. In the meantime,

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if you have questions, any of us on this subcommittee are available and glad to address your concerns or suggestions.

With the Love of Christ,

The Reopening Subcommittee:

Robert Plummer, Church Council Chairperson

Pat Oxley, Lay Leader

Richard Blue, Missions Committee Chairperson

Jim Sippel, Trustees representative

Perry Hansen, Staff-Parish Relations Chairperson

Nancy Rinkenberger, Hospitality Co-coordinator

Richard Thomas, Upward Coordinator and Contemporary Service Attendee

Rev. David Averill, Senior Pastor

Rev. Mike Norris, Youth Pastor

Pastor Jeanne Icenhour, Associate Pastor

Ron Williams, Director of Music, Worship, and Technology