

Middletown United Methodist Church
COVID Protocols
Updated August 24, 2021

The Middletown United Methodist Church family, and especially the Leadership Team, has spent a great deal of time in prayer and careful consideration regarding how we will continue to serve our God and our neighbor in a COVID safe and controlled manner. We have been advised by our Bishop and conference leadership and it has been made clear that our regional and global leadership is prioritizing safety and does not wish for a single transmission of COVID to be attributed to our church activity. We want to share the Gospel and not COVID.

We are requiring masks for ALL people--vaccinated and unvaccinated—due to the increase in cases and hospitalizations in our area. Those who are not fully vaccinated are invited to continue joining MUMC in worship, small groups, etc. electronically via the livestream or virtual video chats or to attend in person wearing a mask or face covering.

If you are feeling ill, please stay home. If you are waiting on test results from a COVID test, please stay home until you have received the negative test result. If you have received a positive test result from a COVID test, please stay home until your medical professional has stated that it is safe for you to return, even if you have no symptoms. If you test positive for a COVID test and have attended any church activities (or activities within the church property) please let us know for the sake of contact tracing.

Just as COVID is a living virus, this document is also a living document. The Leadership team appreciates your patience as statements within this document will need to change. Please continue to visit the church's website, Facebook page, and the Weekly Communicator for the most recent updates.

I. Worship

- A. We are now offering face-to-face worship in the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. Our online worship and conference call experiences will always continue. Anyone uncomfortable gathering for face-to-face worship is always invited to join us via the livestream or conference call. Please note that there are guidelines for face-to-face worship inside and outside.
- B. Guidelines for Face-to-Face Worship: Inside
 - 1. The fellowship hall is now open for worship and will be used to accommodate overflow from the sanctuary. The worship celebration will be simulcast into the fellowship hall via video monitors.
 - 2. Attendance for worship celebration will be limited to 100 people in the sanctuary and 100 people in the fellowship hall.
 - 3. Church Door to Sanctuary
 - a) Welcome Team members will be inside: at main door and at the entrance to the sanctuary.
 - b) A welcome sign posted at entrance outlining our current COVID protocols.

- c) Welcome Team member will direct all to sanitize hands, offer mask if they don't have one and then direct them to sanctuary entrance.
 - d) Tape will be on the floor leading to the sanctuary to indicate a proper 3-foot distance.
 - e) Communion Sunday - the elements will be individually wrapped and available for worshippers to pick up on their way into the worship space. (Decision to be made in the Fall)
 - f) Offering plate will be at the entrance of the worship space.
 - g) Seating:
 - (1) The first pew on each side will remain unused.
 - (2) Seating is not assigned, and pews are not blocked off. Instead, people must sit so as to maintain at least a 3-foot social distance between non-cohorted individuals.
 - h) The 2 bathrooms closest to sanctuary will be open.
 - i) Hand sanitizer will be at the bathroom entrances.
 - j) If someone leaves the sanctuary to use the bathroom, a Welcome Team member will direct them and remind them to sanitize hands on way in and way out of bathroom.
4. Church Door to Fellowship Hall
- a) If the sanctuary is filled to recommended capacity of 100 people, overflow will be directed by Welcome Team members to the fellowship hall. Seating will be based on a first come first served basis.
 - b) Folding chairs will be available at the doors to the fellowship hall. Congregants will take their own chair(s) from the racks provided, and set themselves/family up, while adhering to the social distancing protocol of 3 feet. Assistance will be provided, if needed.
 - c) Elements for communion (when applicable) and offering plate will be inside the fellowship hall.
5. Sanctuary During Worship Celebrations
- a) All worship leadership and musicians will be in position and ready for service.
 - b) For Communion Sunday, Pastor Derrick will have any elements he chooses to use during the service already in place, and he will remove them at the end of service.
 - c) Singing by the congregation is permitted
6. Those leading congregational singing must be spaced 3 feet apart unless in a family unit.

C. Cleaning

- a) Praise team will wipe down sound board and their own electronics.
- b) Pastor Derrick will wipe down all of his equipment.
- c) Music Director is responsible for cleaning all her equipment.
- d) Carolyn Hooper will wait several hours before cleaning the sanctuary, fellowship hall and bathrooms.

- e) Careful attention will be paid to “high touch” areas such as bathrooms, wooden backrest of pews where people rest their hands, door handles, light switches, and chairs used in fellowship hall.
 - f) As additional worship celebrations are launched, this procedure will need to be modified and additional cleaners may be necessary.
2. Offerings
- a) Worship leadership will gather the Sunday morning offering from the plate and properly pass it off to the people designated by our financial policy and procedures.
- D. Guidelines for Face-to-Face Worship: Outside
- 1. Guidelines for face-to-face worship outside are very similar to the inside worship.
 - 2. Please follow the Inside Worship guideline sections.
 - 3. The following differences apply:
 - a) BYOB (Bible) and chair--please bring your own chair, no chairs will be provided.
 - b) Please bring your order of worship printout or email as there will be no video monitors outside with the song words on display.
 - c) Family units will be guided to sit at least 6 3 feet away from other family units.
 - d) Please pay close attention to the church’s Facebook page and voicemail system for last minute changes due to inclement weather.
 - e) Please note that there will be no “awning” so those with sun/heat issues may want to join us virtually.

II. Church Ministries/Missions & Community Groups

- A. The term Church Ministries and Missions refers to small groups, children’s ministries, and youth ministries. These groups are specifically run/organized by the church and church membership.
- B. The term community groups refer to Boy Scouts, Al-Anon, and other similar groups. These groups are not church specifically run/organized ministries.
- C. All Community Groups must follow the regular approval process with the Board of Trustees.
- D. All groups are welcomed to continue to meet virtually (via ZOOM).
- E. All groups must follow the entire MUMC COVID protocols. It is the responsibility of the leader to make sure that the group follows the protocols: 3 foot social distancing, face coverings, etc.
- F. All Groups may meet inside or outside the church building as needed. The following guidelines for meeting must be followed:
 - 1. Group size in the fellowship hall may not exceed 100 people
 - 2. All participants must maintain social distancing of 3 feet.
 - 3. The kitchen is not to be used.
 - 4. Classrooms may be used to the extend extent that the 3-foot distancing may be maintained.

5. The group leader is responsible for sanitizing the bathrooms and areas used.

III. STAFF

- A. Staff members shall be permitted to return to working in the church office as they are comfortable.
- B. Social distancing of 3 feet or more is required.
- C. Staffing hours and compensation means will be decided for each employee based on the requirements of the job and the requests of the employee.

IV. Preschool

- A. The Preschool staff and Preschool board will develop and maintain their own COVID safety protocol. Said protocol must meet or exceed all state guidelines.
- B. Visitors:
 1. While the preschool is in session, no one is to visit/enter the church building who is not a staff member of the preschool or a student.
 2. If someone needs to enter the building, they must contact the Office Manager, Anne Cullen, who will then inform the LPP Director. If agreeable, an appointment will be made to enter the building.

V. Music Ministry

- A. ALL musical groups MUST practice COVID safety and follow these protocols.
- B. All musical groups should discuss amongst themselves what all the members are comfortable with while following the COVID protocols.

VI. Miscellaneous items

- A. Playground: The playground will be available for church and community groups upon request.
- B. The Sunday morning nursery is now available.
- C. Children's Sunday School will be meeting during the 10:00 worship service. Masks and social distancing will be required in the building.
- D. Special events—weddings, baptisms, funerals—must also follow these guidelines. The church members inviting others to our church need to pass along the masking and social distancing requirements to those invited. If needed, the church members will be asked to assist the ushers in enforcement of the protocols.