

Recommendations of the Re-Entry Task Force for St. Paul's United Methodist Church
Written June 15, 2020

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

We are a committee of clergy, staff, and congregational members who have been asked to recommend specifics for how St. Paul's should respond to the pandemic, particularly in respect to the continued closure and/or reopening of in-person church activities. We have guidelines from the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church and the Linn County Health Department to assist us.

We recognize that for some our decisions will seem too slow and for some they will seem too fast. However, we honor the guidance set before us by the Iowa Conference, which is to *Do No Harm, Do Good, and to Stay in Love with God*. Balancing of the needs for keeping our congregation safe, preventing the spread of infection, and providing spiritual support in a variety of ways requires a judgment call through uncharted waters.

1. TIMELINE

The guidelines from the Iowa United Methodist Church (IAUMC) and those from the Linn County Health Department (LCHD) for communities of faith are similar:

IAUMC	LCHD
Red Light	Closed Status
Yellow Light	Phase 1
Yellow Light	Phase 2
Green Light	Phase 3

The IAUMC uses a red light, yellow light, and green light designation. The LCHD uses a closed designation which is the same as the red light, a Phase 1 and 2 corresponding to the yellow light, and a Phase 3 corresponding to the green light. As of June 12, 2020, Linn County has achieved Phase 2 status.

As of June 1, IAUMC's status change for local churches, moving from Red to Yellow light, is determined by each local church, by monitoring our local county statistics and trends. If we are aligning ourselves with LCHD, this would indicate that **we are in Yellow Status, Phase 2**.

The IAUMC, regardless of Red Light, or Yellow Light status, recommends continued online-only worship for churches, such as St. Paul's UMC, with over 50 people in worship each week. St. Paul's plans to continue with Sunday morning online-only worship through the end of July, at which time we will reassess.

Since Linn County has moved to Phase **2**, as of June 12th, we could begin to provide some group opportunities of up to 50 people, using the mitigation guidance from the IAUMC.

We recognize that anything held outside the church building is probably safer than inside. At any time, the metrics may mandate a return to closure by the LCHD and the UMC.

Neither LCHD nor IAUMC recommends full opening with business as usual activities until a vaccine is available. This is the definition of Phase 3 or Green Light status.

Neither group recommends in-person participation of high-risk people defined as anyone over 65, anyone with underlying conditions, or anyone with exposure to or positive test to COVID 19 in the last 14 days in any of the reentry activities. If you are over 65, we encourage you to participate in the life of St. Paul's through online methods or other alternatives (such as from the safety of your car). However, we recognize the choice is for each individual to make.

(Question still being researched: Should we have a consent waiver for participants- noting the risk of gathering?)

2. STANDARDS for OPENING St. Paul's UMC OFFICE

Entrance to Church Building:

Our church building doors will remain closed, until such time as a vaccine is available (Phase 3).

Anything entry prior to that will require:

- ringing the doorbell and gaining access for any individual appointments, pick-ups, drop-offs, or a need to connect with staff.
- OR, entering by way of a Door Greeter who will allow you into a scheduled event.

Every person coming inside the building:

- will be required to wear a mask. Disposable masks will be made available for anyone who does not have their own.
- If during the week, will fill out a log-in form (name, date, testify to being symptom-free and not having been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19). Disposable pen to be provided.

Staff Practices to minimize risk for exposure OR transmission of COVID-19

- Staff who can efficiently do their work from home may continue to do so. Those working at home must keep a log and report regularly.
- All staff will:
 - have temperature taken and logged when entering each day.
 - be required to wear a mask in the open areas of the office, if occupied.
 - not be required to wear a mask when working alone inside individual offices, plexiglass cubicle spaces, or when working alone outside the open areas of the main office.
 - must practice social distancing and good hygiene, including hand washing and hand sanitizer.
 - use disinfectant-wipes or appropriate cleaning products for our equipment, between each use. Products will be placed near the copier.
 - clean their own work area daily, if able, to assist maintenance staff

Adjustments to be made to workspace

Trustees should mount plexiglass:

- at the front and ½ of the side of the front desk
- at the side of Shelby's desk
- at the front and ½ of the side of Jenn's desk
- between Jenn's and Garr's cubicles
- at the front of Garr's desk
- between Garr and Lynae's desk
- at the front of Lynae's desk
- between Lynae's and Holli' desk
- at the front and ½ of the side of Holli's desk.

3. SMALL GROUP MEETINGS INSIDE THE CHURCH

- This would only apply during time St. Paul's is in 'yellow light' status.
- Applies to committee meetings, adult spiritual formation opportunities, small social gatherings, small prayer meetings.
- We still encourage online gatherings when possible, but when this is not appropriate or possible, then, the following would be expected.

Practices

- Meetings should be scheduled with staff in the church office
- No food should be shared
- At time of gathering
 - sign in when entering church, use hand sanitizer, take temperature. If feeling ill, stay home
 - all participants must wear a mask and keep it on during meeting's entirety
 - go directly to meeting space, stay in this area and only use closest restroom
 - Participants should bring their own resources and not pass them around.
 - when possible, any documents should be emailed, rather than handed out
 - maintain appropriate distance in meeting
 - leave the building when the meeting is over
- Maximum number of people need to correlate to LCHD and IAUMC guidelines.

For group leader

- schedule meeting with church office
- space seating at appropriate distances
- monitor number of people, make sure all parts of this policy are followed
- put sign-in sheet under the office door when all participants have left

For individual participants

- sign in when arrive
- wear mask entire time in the building
- follow expectations for social distancing
- stay in appropriate areas (meeting room and closest restroom)

For office staff

- schedule groups in largest room available from a pre-determined list of rooms.
- stagger meeting start and end times
- provide a sign-in sheet for the group that also includes the details of the meeting (time, location, etc.)
- maintenance provide additional sanitizing after group leaves. Groups will be asked to spray for sanitation as they conclude their meeting.
- Consider posting notice on doorway from Maintenance Staff of cleaning completed in each room.

4. IN-PERSON WORSHIP INSIDE SANCTUARY (and as it pertains to any worship in Wesley Center or Chapel)

Preparing for Attending

- Plan to wear a face mask. Use your own unless you do not have one. A disposable one will be provided.
- Pre-registration is required for your pre-assigned, staggered arrival times in order to avoid crowds entering at the same time and to pre-assigned seating.
- Please stay home if feeling ill, or in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Entering St. Paul's building

- Everyone will use the main entrance on the 2nd Avenue side.
- A Door Greeter will stand outside door to open the door, minimizing multiple contacts.
- Temperatures will be taken upon your arrival. 100.3 or higher would indicate that you should not attend.

Upon arrival and seating

- One volunteer will operate the elevator, push buttons, ride the elevator with you, alternating between main entrance level and Sanctuary level.
- Stairs are encouraged to be used for those who are able, minimizing touching of handrails.
- A Greeter will meet you at carpeted entrance to the hall outside Sanctuary, marking attendance (for tracking purposes), reviewing assigned seating for arrivals, and helping to stagger entrance into the Sanctuary.
- All four entrances to Sanctuary off of the hallways are also assigned, accounting for accessibility and its location to your assigned seat. All four doors will remain open before, during and after the service.
- Your assigned seating in the Sanctuary will be based on number in your family, with acceptable social distancing guidelines followed. Pre-registration is required through the office the week prior.
- We will allow a few spaces reserved for guests who may attend.

- Seating will be at a minimum every other pew, alternating between aisle and mid-pew assignments.
- If seated in the balcony, please enter through one of the Sanctuary hallway doors and proceed up the stairs at the back of the Sanctuary. Try to avoid touching the handrails and walls. No seating will be assigned in the sections close to the tech crew in the control center. (TBD)

Worship Service Modifications

- Hymnals, Bibles, attendance pads, giving envelopes will be removed from the pews.
- Worshippers are encouraged to not touch the pew in front of them, especially while standing or sitting, nor the top of the aisle end piece of the pew.
- We will use electronic bulletins as much as possible, as we have done with our online only services.
- Worshippers are required to wear a mask during the entire time in the building. Worship leaders will also wear masks except when in a leading role throughout the service. Face shields may be considered.
- Congregational singing and congregational spoken responses will not happen. Humming to oneself while a song leader sings is okay.
- Holy Communion will not be offered during this time.
- Offerings will be collected at the doorway or other safe ways of collection.

Departure

- Staggered departure times will help us avoid congestion. Please exit through the same doors you entered.

5. OUTDOOR GATHERINGS onsite (Parking lots, green spaces) and St. Paul's UMC MINISTRY OFF-SITE GATHERINGS (Driveways, back yards, campfires, etc.)

- During Early Phases of re-opening, small groups are encouraged to meet at an outside location. This may include at the church, a park, or a member's home. The Iowa Department of Public Health guidance supports this recommendation. We will find creative ways to offer smaller gatherings throughout the week or weekend.
- As was mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, high-risk individuals are encouraged not to attend in-person gatherings. Online small group options will continue for anyone, especially for those who do not feel comfortable being in person or are in higher risk categories.

Guidelines for Outdoor Ministry Events

- We will follow the guidance of the CDC, WHO, IDPH and metrics of Linn County and the church, in offering how many people can be in a small group setting, both at the church or off-site.
 - Follow accepted social distancing practices, encouraging the use of face masks.
 - If feeling ill, stay home

- Sign-up is required for participation to help with tracking and monitoring this number.
- A Church Staff member should be involved in the initial planning process
- Individually wrapped refreshments or snacks could be provided from one person, but no potlucks!
- A restroom will be made available if the event is outdoors at St. Paul's UMC.
- St. Paul's playground is not available for use at this time.

Other Suggestions and Ideas for Small Groups:

- Social distancing may necessitate the starting of new groups and/or multiplying existing groups due to limitations so we can accommodate for distancing in smaller spaces.
- For those that do not yet have a small group, this is an opportunity to renew relationships and perhaps start some small groups. As conditions shift, these small groups can provide spiritual and emotional support for one another and offer a setting for mission.
- Consider outdoor small group gatherings on Church Grounds (parking lot or green space), or driveway gatherings, where small groups, socially distanced (Sunday School Classes, youth groups, adults groups or other natural groupings) gather together to read the scripture, discuss their spiritual life and pray together.
- Consider lawn chair ministry where you drive to someone's front porch, bring your own lawn chair, meet with a socially distanced group of people to chat, pray, teach, and connect.