**Guiding Principles**

**Do No Harm.**
**Do Good.**
**Stay in Love with God.**

We value Wesley’s general rules for the church, especially, “do no harm.” Jesus told us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This means we will use all the **wisdom of science, medicine and research** we can find to make decisions that enable our communities to be safe and feel safe (James 1:3-5).

We are people of the cross and the resurrection and we recognize that at this moment in our life together we are experiencing both loss and renewal. This means that we will **walk alongside people in their grief and loss while continuing to celebrate new paths for mission and ministry** (1 Corinthians 5:17).

We value community as a fundamental human need and as a crucial dimension in ongoing spiritual formation and growth into the likeness of Christ. Therefore, we continue to **find new ways of cultivating community and deepening our spiritual life** (Romans 12:2).

Our mission is grounded in the great commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind and with all your strength . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31). This means we **love God, love ourselves and love our neighbor.** Jesus (and Wesley) put an emphasis on physical health, healing people wherever he went. Therefore, we value healing and wholeness for all. Jesus paid special attention to the marginalized and the vulnerable. We must hold to practices that prioritize the most vulnerable, in this case, those over age 65 and those with underlying health conditions.

**Our mission has not changed** (Matthew 28:16-20). We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This is still happening as we continue to find new ways to worship, connect, grow, serve and give in the age of COVID-19.

**We seek to preserve the core while stimulating progress.** We are invited to lean into a reorientation that is not simply about returning to our previous orientation, but embracing a new and hopeful vision for what we are becoming.

As we phase into in-person worship & ministry, we call on John Wesley’s “3 General Rules” to undergird our direction.
Present — June 15

Presently, UMC churches in Florida are not holding in-person worship.

Churches are providing worship opportunities via an assortment of platforms including online worship, conference calls, DVD worship, etc. Pastors, staff and key volunteers are creating these worship experiences while maintaining current guidelines of social distancing and meeting in groups of less than ten people.

Discontinuing in-person worship has helped us love our neighbor well by keeping everyone safe.

These guidelines will be reviewed regularly and revised based on updated information. As we move through launch phases, new guidelines will be communicated.
## Current State: What Should We Be Doing Right Now?

**Present — June 15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-Person Worship</th>
<th>• No in-person worship on campus through June 15. Continue hosting online worship services while following CDC guidelines and observing social distancing rules.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Preschools, Children & Youth** | • Generally most of our preschools, childcare, children and youth ministries follow the public school guidance which is closed through the end of this school year. The CDC has strict guidelines for limited reopening of preschools and childcare to assist with children of essential workers. It is difficult for children and youth to practice social distancing. If you plan to reopen any preschool, childcare or children/youth activities prior to public schools reopening, we ask you to be in touch with your District Superintendent.  
• Consider creative online VBS and youth activity options to keep children and youth engaged, making sure to honor the On-Line Safety section of the Child/Youth Protection Policy. |
| **Missions & Outreach** | • No mission trips including youth trips are recommended through the summer.  
• All outreach to vulnerable populations (homeless, etc.) should be done with appropriate social distance and sanitation practices, including no sit-down meals until public gatherings are safe. |
| **Church Staff** | • Working remotely is still recommended.  
• If necessary, on a limited basis, only essential staff and facility personnel should work onsite using the guidelines for size of gatherings, social distancing, wearing masks, gloves, etc. Their presence onsite should be done with minimal overlap. |
| **Adult Ministries** | • All groups will comply with the group size guidelines and social distancing as parameters for gathering. Groups should meet online/via phone as much as possible. |

Recommendations around each of these areas will be regularly updated and revised. If you have additional questions about a specific area of ministry, please consult your District Superintendent.
**Current State: What is Possible in the Near Future?**

**After May 15**

The goal of these worship models is to give options and creative ideas for how to successfully and safely gather and engage your congregation in public worship during the COVID-19 season. *These guidelines will be reviewed regularly and revised based on updated information. As we move through launch phases, new guidelines will be communicated.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Model</th>
<th>Recommendations for Implementation</th>
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</table>
| **Drive-In Church**                    | - Use FM transmitter or PA system.  
- Ensure that members remain in their vehicles and are only with family members they live with.  
- Sick persons should not attend.  
- Restrooms should be thoroughly sanitized before, during and after service.  
- Use of lawn chairs during service should not be permitted.  
**NOTE:** Monitor the weather and be aware of rising temperatures to avoid illness due to overheating. |
| **House Churches**                     | - When groups of a certain number can meet, encourage worshipers to gather in homes in groups of fewer than the maximum number to worship together online.  
- Encourage those who live near one another to gather close by, use neighborhood clubhouses, etc.  
- Use church leaders as hosts to provide hospitality, etc.  
**NOTE:** These house gatherings should adhere to the Child Youth Protection Policy. |
| **Meet at Local Restaurants, Coffee Shops, Bakeries, etc.** | - Help local businesses recover by partnering with these venues to offer brunch worship experiences.  
- Live stream worship and invite X number of people to participate together there and have breakfast/brunch/lunch at the restaurant.  
**NOTE:** Still must stay under social distancing guidelines and maximum group number. |
Preparation Phase

May 15 - June 15

Returning to in-person worship will require a phased-in approach. To promote the safest practices, it is recommended that CDC Guidelines, local guidelines (including county information from the Florida Department of Health) and denominational guidelines all be considered when making decisions about when to launch phases.

PHASE GOALS:

• Create confidence for the staff as plans are made for the congregation and community to return to campus.

• Identify challenges that would hinder bringing people back to campus safely.

• Get comfortable with the “new normal.”
Preparation Phase: Staff, Volunteers & Space

May 15 - June 15

When state and local guidelines determine it is safe for church employees to return to their facilities as part of their normal work schedule, it is important that this opportunity be leveraged to ensure that local church guidelines are established, documented, and most importantly, rigorously followed. **These guidelines will be reviewed regularly and revised based on updated information. As we move through launch phases, new guidelines will be communicated.**

**CHECKLIST: Preparing Staff & Volunteers**

- Ensure facility has adequate amounts of masks and gloves for staff and volunteers (particularly greeters & cleaners).
- Plan an online session to review hygiene, cleaning/disinfecting practices that will be expected upon return.
- Develop plans for changing worship logistics to ensure safety of attendees (e.g. offering, communion). *More ideas in the next section.*
- Develop protocol for ushers & greeters that would allow for social distancing. You may consider new roles for volunteers in high-risk categories. *More ideas in the next section.*
- Create a trial phase to document and practice communications, processes & procedures that will ensure safety when in-person worship is initiated, learning what is and is not effective.
- Publish your local guidelines for anyone on church property. Monitor understanding and adherence to guidelines among staff. Identify any needed guideline or process remediation.
- At the time you consider reopening a preschool, contact your District Superintendent regarding compliance with all guidelines.
Preparation Phase: Staff, Volunteers & Space
May 15 - June 15

CHECKLIST: Preparing Your Space

☐ Ensure 3-month supply of cleaning/sanitizing products. Have a system in place to reorder items before they are depleted.

☐ Eliminate places to congregate (e.g. store chairs; eliminate coffee stations.)

☐ Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, especially those in high-traffic areas.

☐ Develop congregational seating plan for social distancing. Ensure at least a 6-ft distance.

☐ Develop protocol for sanitizing to take place before and after service and in real-time during worship.

☐ Walk through each step of in-person worship multiple times. Follow signage, communications & directions that will be provided to worshipers. Refine as needed.

Click here to view the CDC’s Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting for more information on how to properly sanitize your facility.
Looking Ahead

June 16 and After

Worship is an essential service for our members. The safety of our communities should not be compromised. Guidelines provided by state and local governments are a baseline and recommendations for worship may be more restrictive in the interest of safety. Church officials must be aware of the local situation and should tailor their path through the phases of these guidelines to ensure that they are appropriate to the local situation. **When in doubt, emphasize safety over expediency.**

When first returning to in-person worship, continue to consider yourself an online congregation as not all members will choose to be on campus at first or at all. Consider a “soft opening” relaunch with limited-capacity, in-person meetings that do not exceed the maximum number of individuals recommended by state and local governments. Continue to engage online worshipers even after going to an in-person worship experience.
Looking Ahead: Initial Return to In-Person Worship

June 16 and After

If in reviewing these guidelines, the church determines they cannot meet them for Sunday worship, it is recommended that the church shall continue worshiping only online and review other in-person ministries for the ability to meet the guidelines. These guidelines will be reviewed regularly and revised based on updated information. As we move through launch phases, new guidelines will be communicated.

CHECKLIST: The church is ready to return to a version of in-person worship when:

- Church & staff are in compliance with state/local orders regarding distancing, gathering & sanitation (including the ability to sanitize common areas before, during, and after worship).
- The church is properly staffed with the trained volunteers/lay people necessary to regulate and enforce state/local orders regarding distancing, gathering & sanitation (incl. seating, mask wearing, bathroom occupancy, opening/closing doors, parking).
- The church can provide reasonable accommodation to allow for comfortable worship while still complying to social distancing requirements (for example: clearly marked areas, large spaces for families, special seating for high risk individuals, etc.)
- The church has a clear, proactive communication strategy to ensure congregants are aware of current practices and safety/wellness protocols (e.g. email, website, social media, signage at the church).
- The church has a dedicated team which reviews the church’s compliance to state/local protocols and agrees upon any necessary exceptions.

Who Should Attend In-Person Worship Services?
Congregants meeting the following criteria are recommended to attend in-person worship:

- People who are well (no recent contact with infected persons, not exhibiting flu-like symptoms)
- Clergy, worship team (technical and performing), ushers/lay leaders
- People who cannot attend online
- People who feel it is the right time for their family
# Looking Ahead: Ideas for Safe In-Person Worship

## June 16 and After

The following are not to be seen as requirements, but rather ideas to help churches manage worship logistics in their phased relaunch of in-person worship. **NOTE:** Consider continuing online only church until guidelines can be relaxed to where a comfortable, normal worship environment is achievable. These guidelines will be reviewed regularly and revised based on updated information. As we move through launch phases, new guidelines will be communicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance Register</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Prevent sharing germs via physical items passed from person to person</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No physical attendance pads passed</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create online attendance register</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have usher/greeter fill out attendance register as people enter through verbal conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have individual cards available as people enter for those who do not want to fill out online register</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/V Equipment</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Prevent germ sharing and germs that stay on surfaces for longer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sanitize before and after each service</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify microphones to be used by single individuals, no shared microphones, music stands, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceremonies</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Honor traditions while keeping everyone safe</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consider how your church will address special events: baptisms, weddings, funerals, vacation bible school. What events should be cancelled and what other events can be postponed or “retooled” in a different format?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Limit baptisms to one person per filling of the baptismal pool or one infant per bowl of water in the sanctuary.</td>
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</table>
## Looking Ahead: Ideas for Safe In-Person Worship

### June 16 and After

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Prevent spread of germs through food, passed elements, etc.</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Utilize individual pre-packaged elements handed out as people enter worship venue&lt;br&gt;• Utilize individual cups, wafers, etc., passed out by individual who has sanitized hands, is wearing gloves&lt;br&gt;• Offer a blessing/prayer for those who do not choose to receive communion during this time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry &amp; Exit</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Control pathways, prevent traffic jams, ensure everyone entering worship space has used precautions</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Hand sanitizer at entries and exits&lt;br&gt;• Single entry point, clearly marked exits&lt;br&gt;• Walk-through video to show path/process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food &amp; Beverage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Prevent germ sharing and germs that stay on surfaces for longer</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Discontinue all food and beverage on campus until further notice&lt;br&gt;• Pre-packaged foods given by staff or volunteer with sanitized hands and gloves on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Interaction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal: Prevent airborne droplets of potential germs</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Shorten services to allow for more time to enter/exit the premises&lt;br&gt;• Be aware of social distancing&lt;br&gt;• Discontinue any hand holding, passing of the peace, hand shaking, etc. Instead, encourage another way to greet each other at a distance (smile and wave, or make it fun - <a href="#">Click here for ideas</a>).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Looking Ahead: Ideas for Safe In-Person Worship

## June 16 and After

| Offering | **Goal:** Prevent sharing germs via physical items passed from person to person  
- Discontinue use of offering plates, baskets, etc., passed in pews  
- Encourage online giving  
- Use centrally-located (at entries or exits, along designated single-direction pathway) collection units  
- Offer prayer that specifically mentions online offering to honor & encourage online giving |
| --- | --- |
| **Goal:** Prevent germ sharing and germs that stay on surfaces for longer  
- Remove all individual items in pews (Bibles, hymnals, pens/pencils, offering envelopes, attendance registers)  
- Use projection for liturgy, announcements and lyrics  
- Encourage bringing personal bibles/hymnals  
- Utilize single-use bulletins with song lyrics, etc., that are handed out by individuals who have sanitized/wearing gloves and disposed of as people leave service  
- For smaller churches - Consider sanitizing hymnals and give one to each person/family |
| **Goal:** Ensure rules of social distancing can be followed  
- Do not fill to occupancy through reservations alone; leave space for guests or unplanned attendees who may not have a reservation.  
- Reserved seats should be filled in a timely manner (e.g. 5 minutes after the service begins), otherwise they will be released to walk-ins.  
- Reservation systems must be reliable, easy to use, and accessible. |
| **Goal:** Prevent passing of germs and observe social distancing rules  
- Encourage social distancing measures from family to family  
- Sit every other pew or have a 6-foot space between each family unit  
- Consider dismissing from worship by family, row, or section of the congregation  
- Restrict seating closest to platform |
**Looking Ahead: Ideas for Safe In-Person Worship**

**June 16 and After**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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</table>
| **Simultaneous Services** | Goal: Ensure rules of social distancing can be followed  
- Smaller groups on campus  
- Each group within a different area with service simulcast in multiple places (classrooms, fellowship hall, etc.) |
| **Singing/Spoken Liturgy** | Goal: Prevent airborne droplets of potential germs that linger in the air  
- Encourage all persons to wear masks except for when leaders are leading worship.  
- Maintain at least six feet of distance between persons and at least twelve feet from those on the platform to the first row of occupied chairs.  
- Choirs or large vocal ensembles singing in close proximity are prohibited.  
- Soloists and small vocal ensembles can lead singing from the platform with proper distance.  
- Based on the science available to us, we recommend no congregational singing. |
| **Smaller Groups, More services** | Goal: Ensure rules of social distancing can be followed  
- Shorten services  
- Divide congregation members and assign to services  
- Offer reservation system for services |
| **Surfaces** | Goal: Prevent germ sharing and germs that stay on surfaces for longer  
- All surfaces people come into contact with - seating, doors, etc. - sanitized and wiped down between services. [Click here for the CDC’s guidance on cleaning and disinfecting your facility.](#) |
# Looking Ahead: Ideas for Safe In-Person Worship

## June 16 and After

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vestments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal: Prevent germ sharing and germs that stay on surfaces for longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discontinue use of shared vests - choir robes, acolyte robes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteer Roles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal: Show volunteers they are valued while you are keeping them safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allow for new roles to be created for ushers who may be in higher-risk category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take time to re-vision what roles that previously were centralized around physical elements/interaction - can you give people a different purpose in their roles and not just leave them behind?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There will be a need for a sanitation team to keep things clean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider temperature checks for all staff and volunteers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>