

Plan and Procedures for Reopening Orchard UMC in the Wake of COVID 19

Guiding Principles

The following values guided our development of this plan.

- The safety, respect and well-being of our congregation is of utmost priority.
- We will continue to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to reach everyone keeping in mind our core value of inclusivity.
- We will continue to live out our mission statement of “Transforming the world by growing in faith, serving others, and sharing Jesus.”
- Congregational care will continue to be a priority.
- We will use data-driven, consensus-based references.
- We will use guidelines from public health, government entities, and denominational leaders.
- We value flexibility and adaptability.
- We will ensure transparency and communication to the congregation through a multitude of means.

Safety Procedures:

Orchard identifies as a moderately high risk congregation meaning we have a significant amount of people over the age of 65 and also others with chronic health conditions.

- Masks shall be worn by anyone entering the building. Masks will be made available to those who do not have one.
- Cleaning and sanitizing of the whole building should happen before the building is in wide use. All spaces should be cleaned and sanitized immediately before and after a space is used. A checklist will be posted in each space to record the date and initials of responsible party after completing the cleaning and sanitizing of the space.
- Written procedures for cleaning and sanitizing spaces should be communicated to all groups, posted in all rooms and followed.
- No food or beverages will be allowed at any activities, meetings or events.
- Water fountains will be covered and unavailable for use.
- Disinfecting wipes will be placed in all rooms being used.
- The sanctuary shall be equipped with updated live streaming technology.
- Those exhibiting COVID 19 symptoms should stay home. See symptoms at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- The COVID Advisory Team will discern movement from each phase using the phasing criteria listed below.

Phase Zero

Shelter in Place

- Online worship is held and recorded from homes of ministry leaders.

- Bible studies, small groups, meetings of all sorts are held online through Zoom or other resources.
- The building is closed with minimal staff only entering the building to do essential operations.
- All other staff will work from home.
- Pastoral care occurs via phone or video.
- Clergy may officiate funerals of ten or fewer people at the funeral home or at the gravesite, only if they are comfortable. Social distancing guidelines shall be used, and masks shall be worn by attendees. Zoom funerals are encouraged.
- Clergy may officiate weddings of ten or fewer people in the memorial garden or other outside venues, only if they are comfortable. Social distancing guidelines shall be used, and masks shall be worn by attendees.

Phase One

- Phase One will begin when ten or fewer people are allowed to gather, all gating criteria and core responsibilities are met: when we have seen two weeks of declining case counts in Southeast Michigan, when there is widespread availability of testing, reasonable availability of PPE, and when the COVID Advisory Team feels comfortable with the situation.
- Worship will remain online only, but can be recorded from the sanctuary while incorporating these practices:
 - Social Distancing
 - Disinfection of all equipment (microphones, computers, sound board, music stands, etc.) shall occur before and after use.
 - When not leading worship, anyone in attendance shall wear a mask.
- A possible drive-in style worship offering could be offered at this time with participants staying in their vehicles.
- The church building will remain closed for normal business.
- Staff will continue to work from home, and when coming to the church will wear a mask and before leaving shall disinfect their workspace including equipment and telephones.
- Bible studies, small groups, meetings of all sorts will continue to meet online. Groups of ten or fewer can consider meeting in person using social distancing and wearing masks. Consider meeting outside.
- Pastoral care will continue by phone, in person meetings are possible using social distancing and mask wearing, at the clergy person's discretion. If this occurs in the office, all surfaces should be sanitized before and after the meeting.
- Clergy may officiate funerals of ten or fewer people in the church building, at the funeral home or at the gravesite, only if they are comfortable. Social distancing guidelines shall be used, and masks shall be worn by attendees.

- Clergy may officiate weddings of ten or fewer people in the building, in the memorial garden or other outside venues, only if they are comfortable. Social distancing guidelines shall be used, and masks shall be worn by attendees.
- Recovery groups of 10 or fewer can meet at this time in the fellowship hall.
 - Host shall open the fellowship door and have attendees enter through that door.
 - Masks must be worn.
 - Social distancing guidelines must be enforced.
 - No food or drink is allowed.
 - Chairs may not be removed from a closet/a room and brought to another room.
 - The fellowship hall bathrooms may be used one person at a time only.
 - Host must disinfect all surfaces and chairs before and after the group's use, including bathroom counter, light fixtures and doorknobs/locks.

Phase Two

The shift from Phase One to Phase Two is based on a re-evaluation of the situation using the original criteria. It may take several weeks of improving conditions.

- As the building begins to be open these guidelines will be in place:
 - All who enter shall wear a mask. This will be stated on signs posted on all doors. If someone does not have a mask, one will be provided.
 - Continue to ask congregation members to make and donate masks.
 - Touchless hand sanitizer stations will be placed around the building.
 - Bathroom doors will be propped open.
 - Drinking fountains will be covered.
 - We will maintain a good stock of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer and disposable paper towels.
 - The building will be cleaned regularly and between user groups paying extra attention to high surface areas. For further cleaning directions see: <https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-articles/disasters-emergencies-and-health/general-health-and-injury-prevention/coronavirus-reopen-cleaning/>
- Online worship will continue to be offered.
- A shortened outdoor Sunday service in the courtyard could be offered in addition to online worship.
 - The value of this service will be community.
 - There will likely need to be multiple services held to keep attendance at 50 (could also occur in the evening or weeknights).
 - Because it will be a short service: 20-30 minutes, if the service is at capacity, people will be asked to wait in their cars until the next service begins. Staff will count and monitor. We may need to move to a reservation system.
 - People will bring their own chairs.

- Social distancing spaces will be set up to mark where chairs shall be placed
- All in attendance will wear masks.
- An offering basket will be positioned at the entrance to the courtyard.
- There will be no bulletins, no singing.
- Church attendance will be recorded by staff members recording names.
- There will be no Sunday School, nursery or WOW offered in person.
- Staff members will serve as ushers, greeters and crowd control.
- In the likelihood that this phase lasts longer than outdoor weather permits, service will occur in the sanctuary kept to fifty people at a time.
 - There will likely need to be multiple services held to keep attendance at 50 (could also occur in the evening or weeknights).
 - Because it will be a short service: 20-30 minutes, if the service is at capacity, people will be asked to wait in their cars until the next service begins. Staff will count and monitor. We may need to move to a reservation system.
 - Social distancing will be observed with one household/family per open pew.
 - See Phase Three under worship for further sanctuary guidelines.
- Communion can be offered
 - Tables will be set up in the MAC in a social distanced manner with one family/household per table.
 - Elements will be placed on each table - they will be hygienically prepared by a select few
 - Families/households will come in every ten minutes with no more than 50 people gathering at a time. There will be a blessing offered by one of the clergy when new people enter.
 - Congregants will enter through the SW door of the MAC and exit through the NW door. Both doors will stay open.
 - Drive up communion will be offered for at-risk persons.
 - After a family/household leaves, tables will be wiped down and elements replaced.
- Staff can return to working in their office, wiping surfaces and wearing masks when people enter their office. Masks must be worn in all other areas of the church outside of individual offices.
- The church office will be open 9-12.
- All who enter the building will be asked to sign in and wear a mask.
 - Particular attention will be paid to high touch surfaces and cleaning hands after dealing with business transactions.
- Bible Studies, small groups, meetings can continue to be offered online or in person while observing social distancing and mask wearing.
- Some Bible studies and small groups will be offered online in addition to those that choose to meet in person.

- Pastoral care will continue by phone, in person meetings are possible using social distancing and mask wearing, at the clergy person's discretion. If this occurs in the office, all surfaces should be sanitized before and after the meeting.
- Clergy may officiate funerals of fifty or fewer people in the church building, at the funeral home or at the gravesite. Social distancing guidelines shall be used, and masks shall be worn by attendees. There will be no funeral luncheons offered during this time; no food or drink is allowed into the building.
- Clergy may officiate weddings of fifty or fewer people in the building, in the memorial garden or other outside venues. Social distancing guidelines shall be used, and masks shall be worn by attendees.
- Outside groups of fewer than 50 may resume building use of the lower level classrooms.
 - Negotiation of which rooms are being used must occur prior to resumption of meetings.
 - Masks must be worn.
 - Social distancing guidelines must be enforced.
 - No food or drink will be allowed.
 - Chairs may not be removed from a closet/a room and brought to another room.
 - Host must ensure all surfaces and chairs must be disinfected before and after use.
- No choirs or singing groups can meet for the purposes of singing during this time.
- Youth programming will resume following social distancing guidelines.
- Children's programming will not resume at this time.

Phase Three

The shift from Phase Two to Phase Three is based on a re-evaluation of the situation using the original criteria. You might expect several more weeks of improving conditions to pass before this shift. It is possible that conditions will not improve, but infections will increase again. In that case, physical distancing recommendations would need to be tightened temporarily in order to get back on track. Progress will not necessarily be linear. You can help by encouraging careful hygiene, following of the physical/social distancing recommendations, encouraging people to stay at home if they have any symptoms of illness, and to cooperate with contact tracers if they are diagnosed.

- Worship will occur in the sanctuary and be both live streamed and in person.
- Sanctuary preparations:
 - Physical distancing is no longer required but avoid overcrowding and consider offering an additional worship service for special days like confirmation.
 - Ushers will evaluate sanctuary crowd and add chairs to narthex as needed to allow for people to be spread out.

- Masks must still be worn in worship and in the building.
 - All surfaces shall be disinfected between services.
 - Music will be provided through instruments and choral recordings for the foreseeable future until public health officials deem it safe to sing publicly. Social and social distanced singing may be an option in the interim as well, depending on public health recommendations.
 - Hymnals, bibles, envelopes and friendship pads shall be removed from pews.
 - Online offering methods will continue to be encouraged. An offering box will be available at the exit of the sanctuary for those not using online offering methods.
 - Baptisms can occur. For the foreseeable future, clergy will not hold the child. Clergy will use a shell to pour water over the baby's head. The child shall not be walked around the sanctuary.
 - Communion will continue to be offered as a separate service until recommendations are released from public health experts and denominational leadership. It can also be offered by pre-packaged, individual elements with servers wearing gloves.
 - There will be no passing of the peace or holding of hands during the benediction.
 - There will be no coffee hour.
 - People will be encouraged to leave following worship.
 - Ushers and concierges will hold doors open and control traffic flow as people enter and exit the building.
 - Staff shall attempt to record attendance.
- Children's Ministry
 - The children's ministry team will follow the guidelines of Farmington Public Schools regarding safety procedures and suggested guidelines for group protocol.
 - All children over age 2 must wear masks
 - Nursery age children: There will not be a staffed nursery. There will be space(s) for use as a crying room. Parents can stream on their device or it is possible a device will be provided. Room options include the nursery, parents' room adjacent (also Kristen's office) and the parlor.
 - WOW (Worship Our Way) will be available. To prevent overcrowding, children might be split up into several upstairs classrooms.
 - Each child will use a bag of personal supplies such as scissors and crayons not to be shared between children.
 - Parents can sign in and out electronically. Parents will be asked to provide their cell phone numbers so they can be contacted if there is an issue that needs to be addressed.
 - There will be no lessons involving any sort of food.

- In person Sunday School will not be provided. It is possible that this curriculum will be provided digitally.
 - We will consider starting to introduce special events such as movie night or campfires in the parking lot. People will have to register to keep attendance limited.
 - The children's wing entrance will remain locked. Everyone will enter through the main entrance.
 - We will work to train staff and volunteers in safe practices and to be trauma informed so we can help children cope with emotions.
- Pastoral Care will continue by phone and in person. Hospitals and care facilities will likely still be limiting visitors which will impair in person visits.
 - Bible studies, small groups and meetings of all sorts can meet in person and virtual offerings should continue. In person meetings should be sure to disinfect all surfaces before and after gatherings.
 - We will watch for recommendations from public health experts and denominational leadership regarding resumption of meals and coffee hour.
 - Normal office hours will resume with attention to cleaning.
 - Outside groups can meet wearing masks and disinfecting before and after meetings.

Resources:

"Returning to Church" Wisconsin Council of Churches

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>

"Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic: Before We Gather" Brotherhood Mutual

<https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-articles/disasters-emergencies-and-health/general-health-and-injury-prevention/coronavirus-reopen-cleaning/>

"Principles and Directions for the Reopening of UMC Facilities in Michigan" Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church

www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/

<https://www.oakgov.com/covid/dashboard.html>

<https://www.oakgov.com/covid/casesByZip.html>