

First United Methodist Church
Public Worship Re-Opening Policy
 (Approved by the Church Council on 6.23.20)

Along with the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church of Toms River endeavors to re-open our facilities in a responsible manner that will not contribute to the spread of Covid-19.

A few weeks before re-opening:

1. We will offer a 24 hour Prayer Vigil signup (15 minute segments for 24 hours). Prayer Vigil participants may pray at home or come to the sanctuary to pray. Notification of the Prayer Vigil will come through a mailed postcard, email and personal phone calls to members and constituents. Sign-Ups for the Prayer Vigil will be done online through our website or by calling the church office.
2. The pastors will create an instructional video regarding the worship re-opening policy and email it to the congregation with the weekly update.
3. The pastors will send out regular email updates about adjustments in weekly public worship (as needed) along with the weekly update. The pastors will also continue to provide an online worship option through YouTube, Facebook Live and **fumctr.com**

Outside/Parking Lot

4. Parking – attenders will be encouraged (but not required) to park in every other space. Attenders should not park next to a car that has a person exiting from that car.
5. Ushers will be posted outside to encourage people to refrain from congregating, take temperatures with a contactless thermometer, direct attenders to outdoor hand-sanitizing stations, hold the doors open, and regulate the number of people who enter so as to ensure social distancing.
6. Attenders will be asked by the ushers to return home if they have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, have obvious symptoms of Covid-19, refuse to wear a mask or cause the facility to go over the New Jersey mandated attendance limit (if there is one in place).
7. Attenders are expected to bring their own masks to enter the facility. First Church will supply masks to all who need one.
8. In order to keep others safe, if a person has COVID-19, has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, it is important to shelter at home and maintain distance from others for two (2) weeks.

Inside

9. Ushers will be posted inside to encourage people to refrain from congregating, direct to indoor hand sanitizer stations, encourage/lead attenders to be seated in chair/pew, and ensure that attenders are socially distanced from anyone with whom they are not home-sheltering.

10. *One* person will be allowed in any bathroom at a time. The bathrooms will be cleaned between each use by a volunteer steward. Families with small children, persons of the same gender who are sheltering together and those needing assistance are exceptions to this guideline.
11. The pews and chairs will be arranged to meet social distancing guidelines, the hymnals, bibles and all materials (including visitor information and bulletins) will be removed from the worship areas. Technology will be used to substitute for written materials whenever possible.
12. Offering food and drink (provided by First Church) of any type is postponed until further notice.
13. Communion will be celebrated online on the first Sunday of the month until further notice.
14. Congregational singing will be gradually introduced during the months after re-opening according to state, medical and common sense guidelines. We will begin with no congregational singing. We expect this process to be a long & extended. We base this on the fact that singing pushes spittle approximately 16 feet from the singer and onto others.
15. Strategically placed soloists/instrumentalists will be used in the meantime.
16. To begin, the length of the worship services will be approximately 30 minutes and build gradually over the following months. This is because many members and constituents will be anxious in returning to public worship and 30 minutes serves as a less intimidating option.
17. Greeting time will be a socially distanced wave to others. We will strategically place offering plates/baskets around the facility so they are not passed from person to person.
18. There will be no Sunday School or child care offered for the foreseeable future.

Leaving the Facility

19. After the Benediction/Closing Prayer, attenders sitting nearest the exit doors will leave first and those farthest from the exit doors will leave last. The ushers will hold the doors open and people will walk back to their cars. Attenders are strongly encouraged to maintain six feet of social distancing in the parking lot and continue wearing their masks. Ushers will “direct traffic” in the case of persons driving up to the door to pick up those who struggle with walking.
20. Through various forms of communication, our beloved members/attenders who are considered “vulnerable” according to CDC guidelines will be encouraged to consider their health and participate in online worship until the CDC clears them to attend any kind of event in public. However, they will always be welcome to attend.
21. Appropriate signage will be posted inside and outside of the facility to encourage attenders to practice social distancing, mask wearing, hand sanitizing and avoid congregating.