

**Community United Methodist Church
In-Person, Indoor Worship Service:**

Policies, Procedures, and Protocols

Created by the CUMC Homecoming Task Force

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The points below serve as a quick reference guide for your convenience. They are expanded upon in the remaining pages of this safety guide. Please read this document in its entirety.

A Quick Look at Indoor Worship Protocols and Practices

1. Our main goal is to transition safely and comfortably from our in-person outdoor worship experience to gathering for worship in-person indoors, continuing in a safe and welcoming environment.
2. As with our in-person outdoor services all attendees will be required to pre-register their family (including family or close relationship individuals) using the on-line "Sign-Up Genius" application.
3. Our attendance capacity will be limited for the time being to a maximum of 25% capacity so we can remain well within the State and County health advisory guidelines/restrictions which are currently at 50% capacity.
4. Each pre-registered family unit will be directed to a specific seating location within the sanctuary so that Ushers can efficiently seat everyone and insure safe physical distancing is maintained.
5. Plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to service start time. We want to allow ample time for the Ushers to utilize their check in procedure and direct everyone to their safely spaced seating areas. Each pew in the Sanctuary and Balcony will be clearly marked for allowed seating such that a minimum of six feet separation is maintained throughout.
6. You and your children (over age two per County guidance) must properly wear a mask covering your nose and mouth before, during and after the service while on Church property.
7. Bathroom use will be for emergencies only during this time. The multi-ministry building will not be available for use. Additionally, due to sanitation concerns the playground remains off-limits.
8. If any of the following situations apply to you or someone you live with within the last 10 days, please watch the online or live streaming service and do not attend the in-person service. If you are planning on attending in person, please take your temperature and those of your family group before arriving.
 - Traveled internationally or to a high-risk area as defined by the Maryland Governor's office
 - Had close personal contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a confirmed COVID-19 case (Does not apply to health care professionals who have proper PPE)
 - Experienced flu like symptoms such as fever (100.4 or higher), cough, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose

While these guidelines may appear to be overwhelming, please give them careful attention as they are intended to provide you and your neighbor a safe place to worship.

Introduction

CUMC's Homecoming Taskforce has been charged with looking at ways to bring members of the CUMC faith community back together in a safe manner during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we have been able to successfully worship in person at our Outdoor Chapel, there are additional challenges and considerations that must be addressed for our transition into Indoor In-Person Worship. As we begin this transition, we will plan to have one indoor service each week and will offer live streaming as well as in-person worship attendance. The online pre-recorded worship will continue as we understand that members of our church family are not yet ready for in-person gathering. This new Policies, Protocols, and Practices document outlines and details HOW we will enable an Indoor In-Person worship experience that is SAFE, COMFORTABLE, and MEANINGFUL for all participants.

After review of much information, including an updated, recent church survey and review of the latest US Center for Disease Control (US CDC) guidelines for indoor events, the Task Force determined that a tailored new set of protocols was required. Leveraging work done by other churches that are holding indoor services and our prior protocols document for Outdoor In-Person services, this new document provides essential guidelines and practices necessary for our transition into Indoor worship opportunities. The CUMC Church Council supports our efforts to begin a safe and welcoming Indoor In-Person worship experience.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to communicate requirements for a safe and effective reopening of the CUMC property for congregational worship, while reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. These requirements will remain in place until further notice. This document provides/defines the protocols and safe practices for 1) the Worship Leaders (Pastor, Liturgists, Accompanist/Band/Singers/Orchestra, Audio-Visual Support Team, and Ushers) and 2) for all congregants and attendees. There is also a Section 3, which provides protocols and requirements for CUMC (and other local groups) who wish to meet in CUMC indoor spaces.

The Survey

- In September 2020, the Homecoming Taskforce developed an updated Congregational Survey to obtain inputs, comments, and recommendations from the CUMC congregation to assess the interest and readiness to continue to gather for worship and eventually move to Indoor In-person worship.
- Details of all of the Survey responses and comments can be found [here](#). *(Our thanks to Marissa Fischer for organizing the survey and compiling all of the results)*
- We were very fortunate to have received 71 responses to the survey. All of the comments were thoughtful and well considered. It is encouraging to see this many members engaged in how we should best proceed. Given the results of the survey it is clear that there are still mixed feelings about attending in-person worship services in general. In looking at the Outdoor In-person vs the Online worship the percentages of those “attending” are roughly equal. More importantly, the response to the Question “when would you feel comfortable attending Indoor In person worship?” only 16 people responded NOW. The other

55 responses indicated 1) not sure (29), 2) when a vaccine is developed (21) and, 3) when children return to school (5). Given this feedback the Homecoming Task Force feels it is valuable for us to spend time now to develop the necessary Policies, Protocols, and Procedures document to be fully prepared for WHEN the Church Council decides to begin to offer Indoor In-Person worship.

General Guidelines

- In preparing for Indoor Worship, the Church building will be accessible to the Worship Leaders -- Pastor, staff, musicians, and volunteers directly involved in rehearsals, set up, and execution of the indoor service. Masks are to be properly worn covering the nose and mouth and social distancing measures are to be practiced at all times.
- There is a well-marked, separate entrance and exit to the Sanctuary. In order to accommodate those with special needs a handicap accessible walkway is also available. The Ushers will direct congregants upon entering to the check-in area and then to their safely distanced seating area. Also, please maintain safe distancing if waiting in line to check-in.
- Attendance will initially be limited to roughly 25 family units in order for us to execute the rules and ensure a safe experience for those attending. After the first several weeks, we anticipate being able to grow attendance to up to 25% of the Sanctuary capacity (Sanctuary capacity is 320 according to Maryland Fire Marshall) which assures we fall well within the State and Local health guidance. (Note: State and County guidance has recently expanded max capacity to 50%)

- All those (including children) wishing to attend the indoor worship will be required to register in advance (via the Sign-Up Genius app), providing contact information that will be used in the event of a possible COVID-19 exposure. Note that registration must be done by Noon on Friday each week. Ushers will check to ensure only those who have pre-registered attend the service. Sign up Genius will be available to register via Realm and other CUMC communications. You may also contact Marissa at the church office (admin@cumc.net) during regular office hours. She may be able to assist you with registration. Once we reach our limited capacity, with minimal exceptions as described below, we regrettably will not be able to accept additional attendees that week.
- If the sanctuary has not reached capacity, persons who have not registered in advance may be able to attend if safe distancing space is still available and they agree to all protocols in this document (reference the “Quick Look at Indoor Protocols and Practices Section”). They must provide required information to the ushers before entering the worship area. Please note this should be the exception rather than a reoccurring practice as it could be disruptive to the worship service. We ask for grace as we work toward a successful Indoor worship service.
- To ensure proper cleaning between uses, all hymnals, bibles, connect cards and tissues will not be available in the worship space. Words to songs will be projected. Please bring your own Bible. Activity packets for children will not be available, but you will be permitted to bring your own.
- All water fountains will not be available to use, so congregants should plan ahead and bring water if they believe they will need it for personal use.

- Bathrooms in the Sanctuary will be available for *emergency* use if necessary. Only one family unit should be in the bathroom at one time. Effective hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer is required after any bathroom visit. Hand sanitizer is available in the Narthex for this purpose.
- Sunday School, Children's Church, and Nursery are temporarily not available. The Homecoming Task Force is working with the Church Council and Children's Ministries to develop safe approaches for resuming children's activities.
- All congregants will practice social distancing with anyone outside of their family unit, *even if they have gathered together in the past.* We do not want to give the impression of improper social distancing while gathering. Ushers will seat congregants based on safe-distancing grids which will be clearly marked on the pews.
- All congregants will wear masks covering the nose and mouth while on the Church property. Those leading the worship service (band, liturgists,) will ALSO be required to wear a face mask while actively participating in the service as allowed by governmental guidance, recommendations, mandates, etc. As noted in the County Executive directive (June 5, 2020), the Pastor (or lay leader) may remove his mask while delivering the sermon. The Pastor will maintain a distance of 12 ft. The distance between those leading the service by singing and congregants will be approximately 12 feet. The first row of pews will not be occupied.

Note: Guidance from County Executive Order 23: Effective June 5, 2020 at 5:00 p.m., all houses of worship in Anne Arundel County may hold services inside the house of worship and operate under the following circumstances:

- Face masks covering both the mouth and nose shall be worn at all times by congregants, employees and volunteers in accordance with Executive Order of The Governor No. 20-04-15-01, dated April 15, 2020. The leadership of the houses of worship is responsible for enforcing this rule. The individual providing the sermon may take off the face covering as long as there is at least a 6-foot separation from all other individuals.
- Loud and forceful singing increases the risk of transmission and must be avoided. However, congregants may sing softly, hum, or clap as long as masks are properly worn and safe distancing is maintained.
- We ask that each family take responsibility for ensuring that their entire family (including children) sit together and practice social distancing with people outside of their family unit. Ushers will remind congregants of the need to socially distance as necessary. This will assist in avoiding uncomfortable conflict during worship.

SECTION 1: Specific Protocols for Worship Leaders

This section is provided for personnel leading and supporting indoor worship including: Pastors, Accompanist, Band, Singers, other Musicians/Ensembles, Liturgists, A/V technicians, and Ushers.

- Each of these individuals will take his or her temperature and self-monitor for any specific symptoms prior to coming to the sanctuary. If someone believes they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19, they should refrain from coming back for Indoor worship for ten (10) days and after a negative test result.
- Individuals will self-report if they have been infected with COVID-19 or are exhibiting symptoms, including fever, upper respiratory infection symptoms such as coughing and nasal congestion, loss of smell and taste. They will also notify the other members of the Worship Team that they will not attend and will be quarantining for ten (10) days.
- If a worship leader/personnel contracts COVID-19, the church office should be informed as soon as possible so that:
 - the church may be praying for that individual/family.
 - the congregation can be informed of any potential COVID-19 contact.
 - there is time to arrange for “substitute personnel” and/or make necessary adjustments to the order of worship.
- All who are leading or supporting the indoor worship service will also be required to register with their contact info weekly using the Sign-Up Genius.
- With the exception of the Pastor, those leading the worship service will be required to wear a face mask while actively participating in the service as specified by governmental guidance, recommendations, mandates, etc.

- All band members and singers will remain at least 6 feet apart from each other, unless they are in the same social bubble (e.g., family members). Members will wear masks at all times during rehearsals and worship that follow CDC guidelines.
- Singers will face forward when singing and remain approximately 12 feet from the first occupied pew of worshippers. Mics will not be shared, and will be disinfected after use. One mic will be reserved for the use of the Pastor.
- The distance between the Pastor and the congregants will be approximately 12 feet, which maintains safe distancing between the Pastor and congregants wearing masks. The front row of pews of the Sanctuary will not be occupied.
- Worship leaders/personnel will practice meticulous hygiene, and will wash or disinfect hands before and after rehearsals and services.
- Lay Liturgists should plan to use their own Bibles/Hymnals for the readings they deliver.
- After the worship service is concluded participants will follow appropriate sanitization procedures for any equipment (chairs, instruments, music stands, etc.) or worship elements are returned to storage.
- These same protocols will be in place for weekday recording of the Traditional Worship elements for use in our Sunday online prerecorded worship service.

Latest CDC Guidance on “Fully Vaccinated” persons is detailed here:

In the updated guidance, the CDC said such quarantining is not necessary for fully vaccinated people within three months of having received their last doses as long as they do not develop any symptoms. "Fully vaccinated" means that at least two weeks have passed since a person has received the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or one dose of a single-dose vaccine. Updated Feb 10, 2021

SECTION 2: Protocols and Practices for Congregants

Regarding Congregants and COVID-19

- It is a congregant's responsibility to determine if they or a family member show signs of COVID-19 before attending an indoor service. We ask that all who have registered take their temperature at home and anyone with a fever (over 100.4) or showing other signs of being sick, **remain at home**, seek medical attention, and quarantine according to US CDC Guidelines.
- If a congregant has contracted COVID-19, the church officers should be informed as soon as possible so that:
 - the church may be praying for that individual/family.
 - the congregation can be informed of any potential COVID-19 contact.

Mask Usage

To protect our Church family, CUMC is complying with CDC and State Health department guidelines by requiring the proper use of face masks covering both the nose and mouth while on Church property. While we believe we will be able to additionally minimize the risk of COVID-19 community spread by having designated seating and socially distancing in the indoor setting, the risk of airborne transmission remains. Requiring the use of face masks while entering, during worship, and while exiting to your cars is essential to sustaining confidence and the feeling of safety to all participants.

General Logistics Before Indoor Worship

- The playground is not currently available. Parents, please make sure your children do not use it.
- Upon entering the Narthex area everyone must check in with the Ushers for further direction. Ushers will confirm pre-registration and direct attendees where to sit. Congregants are asked to arrive 15 minutes early and keep a safe distance from others as they check in. There will be designated spaces for congregants in need of assistance.
- Ushers will ensure only those who have pre-registered are allowed to attend.
- NOTE: In the unexpected event that an additional family guest or a new Visitor from the community who was not pre-registered arrives, they may be allowed to enter the worship area if: 1) they complete a registration form (consisting of contact information and health screening questions; 2) read and agree to follow the safe worship policies and protocols (as specified in the “Quick Look at Indoor Protocols”); and, 3) there is sufficient safe seating space remaining in the Sanctuary or Balcony. (Visitors will be provided information on pre-registration procedures for future services)

After Indoor Worship

- At the end of the service congregants will leave the worship space at the direction of the Ushers and using the designated and marked exit doorways. Dismissal will be from the back of the Sanctuary to the front to minimize cross flow traffic. Balcony will dismiss last.

- If you choose to socialize after the worship service please do so after leaving the worship area and Saints Plaza, remembering to practice proper social distancing and continue to wear your face mask while on church property.
- Once the worship area is clear and after each week's worship service our professional cleaning crew (AFS) will perform a complete cleaning of all occupied areas before the next planned use of the Sanctuary building.
(This cleaning typically takes place on Sunday evenings.)
- The band members/musicians are responsible for the sanitation and break down of their equipment.
- The CUMC Homecoming Taskforce will revise these requirements when needed and in compliance with Local, State and Federal Government directives/orders/mandates.

Enforcement

- The Pastor will remind congregants to practice social distancing, and to keep in mind the safety and wellbeing of their fellow neighbor by properly wearing a face mask while on Church property.
- All congregants will practice social distancing with anyone outside of their family unit, even if they have gathered together in the past. We do not want to give the illusion of improper social distancing while gathering.
- Anyone who **refuses** to follow the rules will be asked by an Usher or other designee to leave the property and will be encouraged to join worship using our online option.

SECTION 3: Use of CUMC Indoor Spaces by CUMC or local community sponsored groups

If your group has a need to meet in-person in CUMC indoor spaces, **we ask you, as leaders, to affirm that you and your guests will abide by the following protocols and procedures.**

Also note that as more data becomes available, we reserve the right to cancel your meeting or to modify this document.

- Do maintain a physical distance of six feet from the next participant unless you are family, living and sequestering in the same home. You may bring your own folding chairs, but must maintain safe distancing of a minimum of six feet.
- You must properly wear a mask covering your nose and mouth before, during and after your gathering time while on church property.
- Church bathrooms in the Sanctuary level will be available for emergency use only during your meetings. Please inform your members ahead of time. Group leaders will be responsible for clean-up (wipe down of contact surfaces) if used at conclusion of their meeting. Due to the size of the bathrooms, usage is limited to one person at a time. These precautions are to minimize the number of additional cleanings that would be required. Additionally, due to sanitation concerns and child health guidelines, the playground is off-limits.
- Please inform your guests that if any of the following situations apply, they should refrain from attending. Within the last 10 days, have you or a family/household member . . .
 - Traveled internationally or to a high-risk area as defined by the Maryland Governor's office (<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Documents>).

- Had a known exposure to another individual positive for COVID-19 (less than six feet distance or 15 minutes of engagement). This does not apply to healthcare workers who, as a part of their employment, experience COVID-19 exposures and are trained in proper use of PPEs.
- Experienced flu like symptoms such as fever (100.4 or higher), cough, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose.

You, as leader of this group agree to monitor the health of your group members at the meeting, by reviewing these high-risk behaviors and asking persons to self-select, abstaining from the meeting for the common good of the group. Likewise, for the possibility of contact tracing, you must maintain a list of attendees with contact information. If someone in your group does contract COVID-19, this must be reported to the church office by email (admin@cumc.net) or phone (410-721-9129).

Disinfecting

There are wide divergences on the length of time that COVID-19 can remain viable on surfaces. Erring on the side of caution, we do ask that . . .

- Everything your group has brought to the indoor meeting area must be removed.
- You wipe down any high contact surfaces using the provided disinfectant solution and/or supplies (provided by our Trustees or cleaning company) on all fixed surfaces used by members of your group. You are encouraged to bring and carryout disposable gloves.

Scheduling of group meetings will be done as usual through the church office via email (admin@cumc.net) or by phone 410-721-9129. It is advisable to keep your group's attendance to as small a number as possible given the limited spaces/areas (Sanctuary, Narthex, Balcony, or Nursery) in the main church building. Maximum attendance in the Sanctuary (all spaces) will be 25% of total capacity which is 80 or less people. Note, however, that when using separate areas of the Sanctuary building, that safe distancing of attendees is still required (i.e., 6 feet between people). As such attendance in just the Narthex, Balcony, or Nursery room will have more limited attendance allowed. Each group leader is required to provide an attendance log to the church office within 24 hours of their meeting.

Other Considerations

Communion

- Traditional Communion elements (i.e., by Intinction) will not be offered at the indoor worship service.
- At the discretion of the Pastor, the Sacrament of Communion may be observed in non-traditional ways that may consist of prepackaged, sealed elements which congregants may partake of during the service or at home following the service. Congregants may also bring their own elements from home.

Sanitation

- The building, including high contact surfaces and bathrooms, will be professionally cleaned each week to ensure safety among all users.

- All products used to clean and sanitize, are in compliance with US CDC Guidelines. Additionally, any individual who is tasked with the cleaning and sanitizing will wear their own proper personal protective equipment as noted in the US CDC Guidelines.

Indoor Environment

As appropriate, the windows along the sides of the Sanctuary may be opened to increase air cross-flow and ventilation. Also, important is the fact that new HVAC units have been installed in and around the Sanctuary building. A spring maintenance inspection will be scheduled and performed. The trustees have worked out a schedule and procedures for changing the filters for these units and have a tracking system for these changes. Filters will be changed out in accordance with the planned inspection intervals. This plan is also in place for the MMB and new installations are pending for that building as well. All drinking fountains inside the main church building will be turned off.

Number of Services

At this stage of our Homecoming journey we would like to experiment with the best opportunities for providing a meaningful and joyful worship experience. We also intend to maintain a balance of both Traditional and Contemporary offerings. As such, initially:

- Community Church will offer one pre-recorded Traditional Service available online and one live (in-person) and live streamed (online) Contemporary Worship Service each week. This works best as we start out given that a full-choir, orchestra, and Bell Choir are not presently a possibility given the safety and required distancing practices.

- As resources and availability of trained A/V technicians allow, live streaming of the indoor service will be available as an online option for those not able or not yet ready for in person worship.

Offering/Attendance

- We will suspend the use of paper Connect cards and will continue to use Realm to collect attendance and prayer requests.
- Those wishing to give an offering are encouraged to use Realm or other electronic means for giving. Checks may also be mailed to the church office.
- While the collection plates will not be passed during the service, there will also be a single “Offering Box/Container” available in the Narthex as you enter.

Baptisms

- Will be planned and arranged with the family on an individual basis. We will examine ways to include baptisms as part of the worship experience and to ensure the congregation is a participant in this holy sacrament.

Bulletins

- Paper bulletins and Connect Cards will not be used during the indoor service. A worship aid application may be downloadable to your phones to follow the order of worship.