

**RE-LAUNCH PLANS IN RESPONSE
TO COVID-19**

As of September 22, 2020
First United Methodist Church
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On March 13, 2020 First United Methodist Church took the precaution of canceling all services, programs, meetings, and groups on-campus. What we hoped would be a few short weeks has now lasted more than six months. The coronavirus continues to impact the entire world and the spread is not slowing down.

As we live into this new normal, the church leadership has discussed, prayed, and struggled with how to fulfill our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

During this time, our worship services have gone to exclusively online through Live Streaming, Facebook Live, and rebroadcast of services. Our worship attendance has actually increased! What a blessing! This demonstrates that the church is the people and we can worship anywhere at any time. That is not to say that we do not miss being together in our sacred spaces. Nothing can replace the spiritual fulfillment of worshipping together with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In partnership with the Senior Pastor, the Executive Council serves as the governing board of our congregation. Members include: Julie Smith, Lay Leader; Mike Stephenson, Trustees Leader; Paul Griffin, Finance Leader; Justin Atkins, Stephanie Brown, LeAnne Burch, Jack Lassiter, and Ray Ryburn. This group has had private conversations with church members, closely monitored the guidance from Bishop Mueller and Gov. Asa Hutchinson, met with our District Superintendent, Rev. Mark Norman, prayed together, and struggled with how our congregation may serve the cause of Christ during the pandemic. This work is not easy, and it is ongoing as we understand more about the virus, as local circumstances change, and as guidance from church, state, medical, and scientific sources shifts.

Due to these changing circumstances, the guidelines set forth are designed to be adaptable and responsive to those changes. As you read this plan, please keep in mind our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We are striving to fulfill our mission, share God's love and grace, and be a part of solving problems – not adding to the problems of our community, with John Wesley's First General Rule foremost on our hearts and minds: *Do no harm*.

The Relaunch Plan was approved unanimously by the Executive Council and Senior Pastor on September 22, 2020

Reviewed by the District Superintendent on September 22, 2020

General Expectations for all Ministries

First United Methodist Church will follow the guidance provided by the Arkansas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, various departments of the State of Arkansas government, and the CDC. As a part of the United Methodist Connection, we will give priority to the directives of the bishop of the Arkansas Annual Conference. With this in mind, the following actions are required for all ministries, volunteers, employees, and guests at FUMC Monticello.

1. Masks covering the nose and mouth are required at all times for everyone over two years of age. Masks will be provided for those who do not have one.
2. Upon entering any part of the campus, all persons must turn in a completed Health Screening Form and have their temperature taken by an authorized person.
3. If someone is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, has known exposure to COVID within the last 14 days, or tested positive for COVID within the past 14 days, that person shall not enter any campus building and shall not interact with any person on the church campus. If there is a pastoral need, please contact the church at 870-367-2471 so that the church can care for you.
4. Individuals who are in high-risk categories as defined by the CDC are strongly encouraged to limit their exposure and stay home. These include the following:
 - 65-years-old and above, cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD, immunocompromising conditions, obesity, heart conditions such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies, sickle cell disease, Type 2 diabetes mellitus
 - Other such conditions may include: asthma, cerebrovascular disease, cystic fibrosis, hypertension or high blood pressure, use of corticosteroids, neurologic conditions such as dementia, liver disease, pregnancy, pulmonary fibrosis, smoking, thalassemia, Type 1 diabetes mellitus. For the latest information on high-risk categories, please access the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>.

For persons in high-risk categories, First United Methodist Church will continue to offer worship services and other programs via electronic means.

5. Groups meeting in-person, whether at the church or off-site as an acknowledged group of FUMC Monticello, shall observe the guidelines for masks and social distancing.
6. There shall be no unscheduled meetings or groups at this time. Any ministry, group, or individuals wishing to meet in-person at FUMC Monticello must schedule their meeting through the Administrative Assistant (870-367-2471 or masterfumc@gmail.com), in consultation with the Senior Pastor. This is to ensure that rooms are set up with proper social distancing, sanitization/cleaning is done properly and timely, and to facilitate contact tracing in the event a person in the group tests positive for COVID-19.
7. All groups meeting either on campus or off campus shall record the names, addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of all persons participating in the group activity in order to facilitate contact tracing in the event that it is necessary.
8. Any events involving children, youth or protected persons shall follow the Safe Sanctuary Policy of FUMC Monticello.

Worship Services

As of September 14, 2020, the Arkansas Annual Conference is allowing groups to meet for services as long as the length of the service does not exceed 35 minutes and social distancing guidelines are followed (36 sq. ft./household). This includes in-person worship, funerals, and weddings. If the Arkansas Annual Conference modifies these limits, this relaunch plan will automatically be amended to reflect the new guidelines. Our primary worship services will be online at 9:00 AM. Worship services are available on the FUMC Monticello website, YouTube, and Facebook pages. In-person worship is tentatively scheduled to resume on September 27, 2020. The worship schedule will be as follows:

Sunday Morning Sanctuary

In-Person 11:00-11:30 AM

We will begin with a limit of 50-persons, including required pastors, staff, the Executive Council, and their families. As appropriate and necessary, the limit may rise gradually to the maximum currently allowed by the Arkansas Annual Conference. Other services may be added, if reservations exceed the maximum limit.

In order to maintain safety protocols, the following procedures will be enforced.

1. All worship services will be limited to the "36 sq. ft./household" guideline. This includes all worship leaders, staff, and volunteers.
2. Individuals/families will be required to make a reservation to attend in-person worship.
3. Worshippers will park on the north side of the Sanctuary.*
4. Participants shall enter the facility through the front doors of the Sanctuary.*
5. Upon entering, participants shall place a completed health screening form on the table in the narthex.*
6. All worshippers over two years of age shall be required to wear a mask covering the nose and mouth at all times when inside the church facility and maintain at least 6ft of social distancing from all other households present.
7. The pastors will direct you where to sit so that social distancing guidelines can be observed.
8. There will be no nursery or children programs provided at this time, per the Arkansas Annual Conference directives. Children of all ages are welcome to worship with their family.
9. Please exit through the Disability-accessible doors on the west front side of the sanctuary. The pastors will dismiss families one at a time. Once out of the Sanctuary, please return to your vehicle, continuing to observe 6 feet of social distance between households.
10. For safety reasons, there will be no refreshments, snacks or water fountains allowed.
11. We ask that only one person or family group at a time be in the restrooms.

* For persons with disabilities, entry into the narthex is available via the door from the Family Life Center. #s 3-5 may be modified in case of rain or inclement weather. Instructions will be emailed to registrants.

Communion

If communion is offered in worship, pre-packaged juice and wafers will be provided in your pew. Social distancing must be observed. The kneeling rail will remain closed until further notice. Drive-In communion and live-streamed online communion will be allowed. Families who participate in online communion shall use grape juice and bread. Unfermented grape juice is preferred, though wine is permitted. Participants in online communion must participate at the scheduled live-stream time (online Communion Services shall not be recorded for later use).

Bulletins, Hymnals, Pew Bibles

Following the guidelines of the Arkansas Annual Conference and to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we will not be providing bulletins, hymnals, pew Bibles, or paper items.

Offering

Offering plates will not be passed during the worship services. There will be a collection box to receive your gifts at the end of the service, near the exit doors. We encourage all to continue to support the mission and ministry of FUMC Monticello through regular, faithful giving. Gifts can be mailed to the church, given on-line at www.fumonticello.org/gifts, and via electronic funds transfer.

Congregational Singing/Passing of the Peace

At this time, singing will not be allowed. Additionally, there will be no passing of the peace. We strongly urge everyone to maintain social distance. Handshakes, fist bumps, hugs, or touching anyone outside of your immediate family are prohibited.

Nursery

Per the Arkansas Annual Conference directives, there will be no nursery or child care provided for any worship service. Children of all ages are welcome to attend worship with their families.

Weddings/Funerals

Weddings and funerals will be limited to the maximum allowed by the 36 sq. ft/household rule. All of the standard procedures listed above for Sunday worship are to be followed (with the exception of reservations). These must be scheduled with a pastor in coordination with the Administrative Assistant (870-367-2471, masterfumc@gmail.com)

Baptisms

Baptisms should be scheduled with the Senior Pastor in advance. They may be conducted during an in-person worship service, while following all guidelines. They may also be recorded in advance and included in the online worship service. Contact the Senior Pastor for information and scheduling.

Volunteers/Staff

If ushers are used, they will be required to attend a training session on the new procedures via Zoom. They will be required to wear a mask at all times. In addition, gloves will be provided for

those who may come into close contact with others (e.g. authorized temperature takers). There will be no handshakes, hugs, or personal touches.

MINISTRY AREAS

This section of the Relaunch Plan goes into effect immediately upon approval of the Executive Council, Senior Pastor, and District Superintendent.

Adult Small Groups and Sunday School Classes

Sunday School classes are encouraged to continue to meet via video conference at this time. If a group does wish to meet in-person, a request must be submitted to the Senior Pastor. In consultation with the Administrative Assistant, the Senior Pastor will assign appropriate rooms, entrances, and meeting time so that social distancing guidelines can be followed. We do ask that groups take attendance by emailing an attendance list to masterfumc@gmail.com.

Bible Studies, Prayer Groups, UMW, and other small groups may meet in-person at the church provided group is less than 50 people and appropriate space is available (e.g. the Sanctuary or FLC worship space. Groups must contact the Administrative Assistant to arrange room, time, and review the general expectations with the Senior Pastor. Note: Due to social distancing guidelines, you will be assigned a room to meet in that fits the size of your group. It may or may not be the room you were in prior to COVID-19.

Wednesday Night Dinners will not be offered this fall.

Care Ministries

Support Groups, classes, and non-church-related groups may also meet in-person as long as the general requirements above are followed. Groups must request to meet in-person and schedule through the Administrative Assistant, in consultation with the Senior Pastor. Attendance shall be taken and the addresses and telephone numbers of those in attendance shall be recorded and maintained by the person(s) in charge of the meeting and maintained in the event contact tracing is necessary. Groups shall be required to sign an Outside Group Form in which the person(s) in charge of the group agree that all persons attending the meeting shall comply with the church's relaunch requirements (including signed Health Screening Forms, masks, distancing, and time limitations).

Pre-School Ministries

FUMC Monticello Pre-School may operate beginning October 1, 2020. They shall continue their programming following the guidelines of Arkansas Department of Human Services and Department of Health Guidelines.

Children's Programming

The Arkansas Conference has directed that no children's ministries are allowed to meet in person at this time. FUMC Monticello's Safe Sanctuaries policy must be followed at all times.

Sunday School Our children's minister, Brenda Wright, provides a pre-recorded children's message for worship each week, and materials are available at the request of parents.

Wednesday After-School Programming

Children's choir, children's handbells, and other children's mid-week activities will not be held this fall.

Nursery and Childcare

At the direction of the Arkansas Annual Conference, there will be no nursery or childcare provided for any on-campus program until further notice.

Youth Ministry

FUMY must follow not only the protocols set forth in this document, but also the guidelines established by the Arkansas Annual Conference. FUMC Monticello's Safe Sanctuaries policy must be followed at all times.

Sunday School

Youth Sunday School may meet on-line for the foreseeable future. Safe Sanctuary policy for on-line meetings must be followed.

Sunday Night and Mid-Week Programming

Plans for in-person gatherings need to be made very carefully, discussed, and approved by the Senior Pastor. All of the general expectations must be followed including, but not limited to: adherence to the church Safe Sanctuaries Policy, limit of 50 total people, any food must be pre-packaged and individual portions; no group singing; masks covering nose and mouth must be worn, and social distancing observed at all times. Youth small groups may meet outside beginning September 20, 2020.

Off Campus Events

These must also be planned carefully to ensure that safety protocols are maintained. Transportation to and from events must meet the Arkansas Annual Conference guidelines. The Senior Pastor must be notified of any off campus events and the event scheduled on the church calendar.

Missions

The work of the church outside of the walls has been critical during this time, and has not been stopped by the pandemic. We appreciate the leaders of various mission projects following the general expectations. Any mission project that wishes to meet on campus must first contact the Senior Pastor. Requirements for participation in mission

activities shall be consistent with the requirements of this relaunch plan, including the recording of those persons participating and their addresses and telephone numbers in the event that contact tracing is necessary.

Scouting Ministries

In general, Scouting Ministries will follow guidelines for Children's Programming and Youth Ministry above and must adhere to all guidance from their governing organizations. Any exception to this policy will be determined by the Senior Pastor.

Music Ministry

We are closely monitoring best practices for vocal and instrumental musicians during the pandemic. Vocal choirs for adults, youth, or groups will not meet at this time. Children's choirs will not be offered this fall. Handbell choirs for children and adults shall not meet in person this fall.

Instrumentalists may be a part of a worship service provided social distancing and safety precautions are taken. In consultation with the Senior Pastor, it is the responsibility of the Director of Music to ensure that the most current protocols from the Arkansas Conference and music experts are followed.

Outside Groups and Special Events

In general, and with any exceptions noted above, outside groups are not allowed to use our facility at this time. Requests may be received by the Administrative Assistant. Any exception to this policy will be determined by the Senior Pastor on a case-by-case basis.

Senior Adult Ministry

Due to our seniors being in the vulnerable category, we recommend that ministries by senior adults be conducted via video conference or other online platform. If a group wishes to meet in-person, please contact the Senior Pastor.

In the Event of Exposure

Anyone who has been on-campus or involved in a church activity off campus and either tests positive or has close contact with someone who tests positive within the past 14 days, shall notify the church immediately. The report should be made to the Administrative Assistant. Notification to the church body of exposure by a person participating in a church activity will be made as appropriate. The place/time/nature of exposure will determine the extent of notification. Each exposure event will be handled on a case-by-case basis. For example: If one youth reported a second-hand exposure to COVID-19, we would follow the Arkansas Health Department guidelines for notification. If someone tested positive and attended a worship service, everyone in that service would be notified. Except as required for determining contact with a person who tested positive or to effectively facilitate or conduct contact tracing, the privacy of persons who have tested positive shall be maintained.

Disclaimer on changes/updates

Due to the nature of the novel coronavirus, the ongoing research and discoveries of virologists, epidemiologists, and medical professionals in terms of infection and treatment, and the current rising rate of cases, this plan shall be revised as necessary. This may include:

- Suspending in-person worship
- Suspending all on-campus meetings or programs
- Suspending office hours or requiring remote work for appropriate staff

What would cause these actions to take place? It is impossible to predict how long this pandemic will last, if the virus will change, or if infection rates will continue to rise. Our goal is to provide a safe, healthy environment for everyone using reasonable measures and with the best interests of the church as a whole in mind. If it is felt that we cannot provide a safe environment, changes will be mandated. Examples include but are not limited to:

- A Staff Member who has contact with members who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past fourteen (14) days.
- A participant in worship or on-campus activity tests positive for COVID-19
- Positive cases of COVID-19 in Drew County that are greater than 10% of total tests
- Local school closures
- Directives from the Governor
- Directives from Bishop Mueller/Arkansas Annual Conference
- Inability to procure proper and sufficient cleaning/sanitizing products
- Observation of unforeseen issues that endanger those attending worship or on-campus activities
- Disregard of protective measures required by this relaunch plan