

Pine Island UMC Re-Gathering Criteria and Plan

We are a congregation in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and are under their leadership.

The recommendations provided are driven by our Three Simple Rules:

- **We are a people that do no harm.** We practice physical distancing to minimize harm to others, especially the vulnerable.
- **We are a people that do all the good we can.** We care for the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors, providing food, emotional support, and supporting our health care system.
- **We are a people that stay in love with God.** When we love God through prayer, praise, and worship, we grow in love of our neighbor. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable.

Our United Methodist faith communities can and must be first responders in caring for the spiritual, physical and mental health of all of God's people all across Minnesota by actualizing these Three Simple Rules. We have come to understand, like never before, that the church is not a building. It is the expression of God's love made visible through the actions of devoted followers of Jesus. It is the expectation of the Minnesota Annual Conference that every congregation will operate within each designated phase at any given time.

The Minnesota Annual Conference Guidelines have a framework of five phases represented in the colors of Red, Orange, Yellow, Blue, and Green. Details of the MAC Re-Gathering plan are available at <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/regatheringplan>.

At the present time, we are in the **Orange Phase**. Under this phase Churches are encouraged to worship online and/or through drive-up worship services—in which people gather in a parking lot. (For drive-up worship, people typically tune in by rolling down their windows or through an FM radio station.)

We will return to holding in-person worship in the Sanctuary when we enter the Yellow Phase. (Details of the plan begin on the next page.)

When we return to worship in the Yellow Phase:

It is important that all of us follow the rules. Not only are we on the “honor system,” each of us has a responsibility for the health and safety of those around us. We will practice accountability with grace.

- Anyone with symptoms such as cough, fever, chills, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea is expected to stay home. Anyone who has been in contact with a person diagnosed with Covid-19 in the previous 14 days is expected to stay home.
- Those attending worship over the age of 5 who do not have disabilities or special health needs will be expected to wear a face mask. Those leading worship will be allowed to remove their face mask for the portion of the service they are leading, and worship leaders will be at least 12 feet from the congregation. Disposable face masks will be available for those who do not have one.
- Persons who attend worship are to be greeted by an usher or designated person who will encourage them to use provided hand sanitizer, give them a bulletin which they will take home after the service, record their name, and make a note where they will be seated in the sanctuary (for the purpose of contact tracing, if contact tracing is needed in case of a known infection later on.) If a worship attender is a visitor or guest, the usher will also write down their phone number or other contact information.
- Persons will go directly to their pew of choice and can greet others only at distance of more than six feet.
- We will have distancing of at least six feet between each family unit. Pews will be blocked off to provide this distancing with something attractive such as purple ribbon.
- If we have more persons coming to worship than can be accommodated in the Sanctuary, overflow spaces will be in the Heritage Room and the Fellowship Hall where those attending will be able to participate through a live stream using the large screen televisions in those rooms.
- Given that singing is considered a riskier practice when it comes to spreading aerosols that carry the virus, and cloth masks and physical distancing are unlikely to be adequate protection, music will be provided a music leader who will be at least 12 feet from the congregation. Even though singing is “strongly discouraged,” persons can hum while

wearing facemasks.

- During children's time, the children will remain seated with their family unit.
- Instead of using the offering plates during worship, a plate will be available at the exit door for persons to leave their offering. Because of potential accessibility needs, the Sanctuary entrance nearest the elevator landing will be used as both the entrance and exit.
- For Holy Communion, disposable Fellowship Cups will be used. They will be handed out as persons enter the Sanctuary. Persons will remain in their pews to partake of the Communion Elements, adjusting their masks only to consume the wafer and consume the juice. A waste basket will be available at the exit for used Fellowship Cups.
- Items in the pews such as hymnals or Bibles will be removed and stored. All needed words will be on the projection screens or in the worship bulletin. In the overflow rooms, the screen images will be a part of video production.
- Persons are encouraged to leave the building as soon as worship concludes. Sidewalk Coffee Fellowship and other means of greeting can take place if they occur outside of the building and follow the suggested physical distancing guidelines. The pastor and other worship leaders greet persons outside of the building after worship.
- The appropriate doors of the sanctuary will be propped open during and following worship to facilitate airflow and limit contact with doorhandles.
- The length of the worship service will be shortened to limit the time spent indoors.

This information will be distributed to congregational members in both electronic and paper form and will be available on the church website.