

First UMC Iowa Park

Restarting In-Person Worship Services

Purpose: This document details the procedures that First United Methodist Church Iowa Park will be using to restart in-person worship services, once approved by the District Superintendent, Rev. Todd Harris. This list will be reviewed weekly in advance of worship services to ensure that all actions have been completed. This list may be amended as needed going into the future.

Guiding principles:

1. **Do no harm.** Any decisions made, or actions taken, are to reduce and minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to anyone who enters the Church facility. While the focus of this document is Sunday worship, this principle applies to other activities throughout the week.
2. **Minimize in-person activities.** By limiting the number of in-person activities during the week, and on Sundays, we limit the opportunities for the COVID-19 Coronavirus to enter Church facilities. Through limited activities within the Church facilities, we also decrease the opportunities for the COVID-19 to be spread to individuals, and then in turn carried into their households.
3. **Provide alternatives.** For those who do not wish, or are unable, to attend in-person worship services and participate in the worship rituals, alternative options will be made to best approximate the worship experience, given the prevailing circumstances. In some cases, changes may need to be made to certain practices of in-person worship and alternatives will be provided where practicable.

The table below lists all of the items to be addressed and the Church’s proposed response to each. This list will be reviewed weekly in advance of worship services to ensure we are providing a safe place to conduct worship services.

Item	Description	FUMCIP Response		
1	Number of worship services	A single worship service will be held on Sundays. This eliminates cleaning between the services. We estimate our normal attendance when we resume regular, in-person services will be close to half of our average weekly attendance (89 for CY 2019). Our sanctuary can easily accommodate 50-60 worshippers sitting as household units while maintaining proper social distancing.		
2	Social distancing	Families will be allowed to sit together. Every other row will be roped off. Individuals at higher risk of contracting the Coronavirus due to age or underlying health conditions will be encouraged to remain at home and worship with us on the livestream.		

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3	Movement of people	Worshippers will be invited to enter through the main sanctuary doors on the front (north) side of the building. Worshippers will exit through the side doors of the sanctuary and directed to exit through the library entrance on the front (north) side of the buildings.		
4	Greeters	Greeters will meet people outside of the church to welcome them and offer to answer questions worshippers may have. Greeters will be instructed to practice social distancing.		
5	Doors	Doors for entering the building and the sanctuary will be propped open with door wedges. At the start of the worship service, the wedges will be removed and the doors closed. At the end of the worship services, the exit doors will be propped open. Worshippers will be guided out by ushers ensuring proper social distancing.		
6	Building access during worship	All doors to the church, except the doors to enter described in #5, above, will remain locked during Sunday worship. Physical access for worshippers will be limited to the church entrance, bathrooms near the entrance, and the sanctuary. All other parts of the church building will be off-limits to worshippers. For those needing access to other parts of the church building, they will be invited to return during weekday operating hours.		
7	Use of Bibles, and hymnals	All Bibles and hymnals will be removed from the sanctuary to 1) minimize risk of contamination of those items, and 2) to reduce the number of items to be cleaned in advance of worship services. Hymn lyrics and Bible verses will be displayed via the Church projector in the sanctuary.		
8	Worship bulletins	Physical worship bulletins will not be printed and distributed. As an alternative, posters will be placed in the sanctuary listing the major points of the bulletin. Other details will be displayed via the projector in the sanctuary.		
9	Offering	An offering will be taken up. However, the offering plates will be placed in convenient, static locations. One offering plate will be placed near the entrance of the sanctuary, and one will be placed near the exit of the sanctuary. Worshippers will have two opportunities to present their offerings. Worshippers will also retain the ability		

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		to donate online, or by mailing their offering to the church.		
10	Communion	Initially Communion will be offered via a “kit” where the bread and juice are in a sealed cup. As worshippers enter the sanctuary, they will be asked to take a “kit” from a table. Kits on the table will be spread out sufficiently so that other kits cannot be touched by people. For those not in attendance, they will be asked to contact the office in advance if they wish to receive communion. We will arrange a no-contact drop-off of the Communion kits to their residence after the worship service.		
11	Singing and music	With a stronger projection potential (microscopic) droplets from one’s mouth while singing, no congregational singing will take place. If one wishes to sing, they must wear a face covering. Special music may be provided in the form of instrumentals, solos, or ensembles. For singing, performers will be at least 10 feet away from the congregation and exhibit social distancing among the ensemble.		
12	Childcare and children and youth programs	No childcare or children and youth programs will be offered during Sunday worship. No programs will be offered during the week (Wednesday Kidz Klub, Youth Group, etc.) until it is safe to gather in such groups.		
13	Sunday school	No Sunday schools will meet prior to, or immediately after, a worship service. The church is exploring ways for classes to meet in larger spaces (fellowship hall) during the week.		
14	Social hour and food offerings	No social hour will be offered during this season of COVID 19. All meal programs (Wednesday night suppers) will be suspended until it is safe to serve meals to the public.		
15	Cleaning worship spaces	High-touch areas in the sanctuary, and the areas leading into and out of the sanctuary, will be cleaned and disinfected 1-2 days after a worship service. No other activities will take place in the sanctuary, providing 5-6 days where any surviving Coronavirus will naturally die. Note: the available science shows the Coronavirus can survive a maximum of five days on a surface; many surfaces offer a much shorter life-span.		
16	Ongoing ministries	All ministries, with the exception of the Iowa Park Food Pantry and AA support meetings, will be		

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		suspended until it is safe to meet in person again. The Food Pantry and AA meeting will limit the number of people gathering in one space to a maximum 10 people and enforcing social distancing. The Food Pantry will continue its recently updated distribution model of no-contact drive up service.		
17	Communication	Since this is a season of constantly changing information and sometimes confusing guidance from the national and state-levels, a multi-layered communications strategy will be employed to share the restart of in-person worship services. Official church communications will occur after all appropriate committees and church leaders have been informed of the re-start plan, and consensus is reached. Should future communications be necessary to announce additional changes, this same approach detailed below will be used.		
17a	Pulpit	The first “official” announcement to restart in-person worship services will be made during the announcements segment of at least two worship services, prior to the first in-person worship service. Reference to the re-starting in-person worship services should also be made near the end of the worship service and invite people to check their e-mails along with the church’s Facebook and webpage.		
17b	E-mails	A re-start e-mail will be sent out to all currently known e-mail address after it is announced from the pulpit. This information will be included and repeated in subsequent, routine church e-mails. A special e-mail information and invitation will be sent out two days prior to the first in-person worship service.		
17c	Facebook/social media/webpage	Postings to the church’s Facebook page and webpage will include details about the first in-person worship service. Information will be reposted often so the maximum number of people will see the information in their “feed” of postings.		
17d	Sunday school classes/church groups	Leaders of Sunday school classes and other church groups will be contacted to: 1) ensure they have received the information about restarting in-person worship; and 2) ask them to contact every member in their group to share the information and provide any clarifications necessary.		

