

September 14, 2020

Milaca United Methodist Church
310 Third Ave NW
Milaca, MN 56353
320-982-6325 Church Phone
763-742-4241 Pastor's Phone

Greetings and Peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ,

This letter outlines your responsibilities and duties to uphold the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for In-Person Indoor Worship for Milaca United Methodist Church. Approved by the Church Council on 9-10-2020. **I realize this is a long letter, but please, please, read it in full and carefully so you are informed of your role in keeping everyone safe and healthy.**

The recommendations in this letter are driven by John Wesley's Three Simple Rules:

- **We are a people that do no harm.** We practice physical distancing & wearing masks 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.

Here are links to the official documents that our Preparedness Plan is based on:

MN Dept of Health <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidfaith.pdf>

MN Annual Conference <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/regatheringplan>

Governors Executive order <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-81.pdf>

This Scripture from the Message paraphrase guide us:

"Love your neighbor as yourself. I am God". *Leviticus 19:18b*

Return to In-person Indoor Worship Begins: Sunday September 20, 2020 @ 10:00 am. On September 27th we will take a private survey as to what time to begin worship in future: 9:30 or 10:00.

- Please **do not** attend in person worship or other church activities if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or are on a medically directed self-quarantine. You are welcome to participate in other ways such as virtual worship, conference calls, thrice weekly devotionals, or request check-in phone calls. Instructions for these other options can be found at the end of this letter.
- Members who are 65 or older, have a vulnerable health condition, or are not yet comfortable to gather in person have the option to continue to participate in online worship and use other available resources (see instructions at the end of this letter).
- If you were inside Milaca UMC and diagnosed with COVID-19 within 48 hrs after, please inform Pastor Joyce as soon as possible, 763-742-4241.

Seating

- On Sept. 20th ushers will assist you in finding a seat that is hopefully near where you usually sit, but it will need to be 6 feet away from anyone else and then that seat will be marked with your household name and becomes your permanent seat. A household refers to individuals who live under the same roof.
- Seats are reserved on a first-come-first-serve-manner on 9-20-2020 & subsequent Sundays for those not present on 9-20-2020. If you are unable to be present on 9-20-2020 please contact Pastor Joyce to see if you can reserve your seat in advance - only those not present on Sept 20th can reserve a seat in advance.

Before and After Worship Service Social Time

- The Gathering space/Narthex will not allow for proper social distancing.
- Conversations must be held outside on the sidewalk or blocked off street during the fall while the weather is still good.
- No gathering in the Fellowship Hall at this time.
- No food or coffee will be served at this time.

Hygiene and Safety

Hand sanitizer will be available at entrances being utilized.

Masks: A mask will be **required at all times** for anyone over age 5 when inside Milaca UMC for any reason, unless you are alone in the building.

- Proper use of a mask ensures that both the nose and mouth are fully covered. Face shields may be worn, but only in conjunction with a mask. Gaiters are not adequate as a mask because they are ineffective in stopping aerosols.
- Those attending in-person worship, meetings, gatherings or events are asked to bring their own face coverings, however, a supply will be available for each service or event.
- Face coverings/masks may be removed while physically taking communion.
- All members are asked to practice good hygiene practices (cover cough and sneezes by doing these into your elbow, wash hands often, use hand sanitizer, etc).

Exceptions to wearing a mask:

Individuals with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the individual to maintain a face covering while in the building. If you have a medical condition which prevents you from wearing a mask, please contact Pastor Joyce 763-742-4241 to reserve a private space outside the sanctuary for worship. Deadline: Fridays by 3 pm.

Private Spaces outside of the sanctuary may be reserved on a series of Levels.

The Levels are as follows:

Level One: Individuals who are high risk, or unable to wear a mask due to health reasons. Enter through the front before 9:40 am and proceed directly to their reserved space.

Level Two: Individuals who have household members who are at high-risk. Enter through the front door wearing a mask, must wait in line to enter the church and then proceed to their reserved room.

Level Three: Individuals exercising civil disobedience by not wearing a mask.

Entrance options: through the front door wearing a mask and must wait in line to enter the

church building, then proceed to their reserved room where they may remove their mask.

An entire *household* may worship together in a reserved room. Those wishing to worship in a separate space may call Pastor Joyce 763-742-4241.

Reserving a room does not guarantee the space. The rooms are assigned by Level, with those individuals in Level One receiving first privilege, regardless of when the request was made, as long as it was before the weekly deadline of Friday at 3:00 pm. The Pastor makes the final designation of the reserved rooms. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidfaith.pdf>

Social Distancing

- We will maintain a 6 foot circle around each person or members of the same household to ensure social distancing at worship, while waiting to enter the building & sanctuary and any event, meeting or gathering at church.
- All attendees to worship are asked to limit movement during the service to avoid inadvertent close contact.

Singing, Speaking and other practices during Worship

- Singing together, even from a distance, is considered a high risk behavior due to the spread of aerosol droplets. A mask is unlikely to protect you or your neighbor. We will utilize reading of hymns as Psalms, humming, and meditative listening of music. We may also occasionally utilize a soloist to share sung music with us. You are asked to refrain from singing. Feel free to hum along and focus on the meaning of the lyrics for a deeper connection with God. Please follow the guidance given by Pastor Joyce.
- Similar risks apply to unison speaking, We ask you to please speak softly and somewhat quietly to yourself for calls to worship, prayers & the Lord's Prayer, etc. Please follow the guidance given by Pastor Joyce.

Other Worship Practices

Offering. MUMC will provide a station for worshipers to drop their offering instead of passing around offering plates.

Passing the Peace. Alternate methods will be used for sharing the peace outside of family households. This may include waves, a reverent bow, placing your hand on your heart, or even using American Sign Language. Please follow the guidance given by Pastor Joyce.

Entering and leaving the building. Lines of people before and after worship will be eliminated. Plan to arrive at church, keep your coat with you, socially distance as you enter through the south end sanctuary door and move directly to your seat in the sanctuary. Stand with your household unit on an "X" and wait your turn to enter the building and/or Sanctuary doors on the right hand side (South side). Exiting will be from the other side (North side door). The center doors will be used for ventilation only, not entering and exiting the sanctuary. Reminder: we will not be congregating in the Gathering Space

or Fellowship Hall for conversation. Conversation may be conducted outside with social distancing practices.

Dismissal. Pastor Joyce will dismiss rows at the end of the service to prevent bottlenecks at the north end exit door. Leave when dismissed all the way out of the building to conduct conversations outside.

Holy Communion Holy Communion will be available as usual at the first service of each month. All are welcome to participate if you feel comfortable. All-in-one Communion kits will be distributed by a gloved usher to each person as they enter the sanctuary on communion Sundays. Please follow instructions given by Pastor Joyce.

Worship Leaders Worship leaders shall wear a face covering/mask during church services or events. They may be worn or removed when singing or speaking, but if removed, must be put back in place after singing or speaking. One Cantor/soloist, if used, will be selected for the entire service.

Worship and church leaders include: presiding pastor, musicians, ushers, greeters, supporting roles (such as camera operator, computer person or set up help) and Church Council members.

Groups Using the Church

- **Groups of 10 or Less** Church groups of 10 or less are allowed to meet in the building with masks and social distancing. These could be social groups, Bible studies, organizations ie. UMW, etc. Coffee and food are not permissible at this time. Groups outside of the church are not allowed to meet at the current time.

To watch the worship service or M, W, F devotionals online: [facebook.com/milacaumc](https://www.facebook.com/milacaumc)

To listen to the worship service or M, W, F devotionals on your phone: Dial 712-432-6122. Passcode 147535# This will cost you 1 cent per minute. So a 45 minute worship service will cost 45 cents.

To speak with Pastor Joyce on any subject or for pastoral care: Dial 763-742-4241.

Quick Guide for Safe Practices

Act Christ-like in your care for others. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Wear a mask that covers your nose & mouth at all times in the building.

(If you have reserved a private space in advance with Pastor Joyce you may remove your mask once in the private room)

Spread out 6 feet apart when waiting to enter building or sanctuary & when seated.

(Those residing in the same household may sit together)

Use hand sanitizer & proper hygiene practices. (Sanitizer will be available)

Seating arrangements will be created the first Sunday back Sept 20, 2020.

(Usher will make every effort to seat you near your regular space, but spacing of 6 feet must be maintained between households. This will be your permanent spot. We will add seating as new households attend on subsequent Sundays)

Enter the Sanctuary through the South-side door and exit through the North-side door. Take your seat as soon as possible.

(Look for signs to help you enter and exit correctly, Center doors are not available for use)

Follow directions from the Pastor regarding worship practices

No singing - humming or reflective listening are encouraged

No passing the peace - nodding, bowing, waving, hand on heart are alternatives

No passing the offering plate - look for box in entrance aisle

Communion will be served on the 1st Sunday of every month

To watch the worship service or M, W, F @ 7pm devotionals online:

facebook.com/milacaumc

To listen to the worship service or M, W, F devotionals @ 7pm on your phone:

Dial 712-432-6122. Passcode 147535# This will cost you 1 cent per minute. So a 45 minute worship service will cost 45 cents. Best to use your cell phone if you have one.

To speak with Pastor Joyce on any subject or for pastoral care: Dial 763-742-4241.