



April 7, 2022

Dear Good Samaritan UMC Members and Friends,

This communication is a much-anticipated update about the pandemic protocols at Good Samaritan United Methodist Church. Please note that the coronavirus continues to evolve, so we should approach these guidelines with a measure of flexibility, knowing we may need to make further adjustments as appropriate:

Effective April 24 (the Sunday *after* Easter):

- Masks will be optional throughout the building, including on Sundays and during Wednesday evening programming, unless otherwise required by your event leader. Nothing prohibits wearing a mask; it is just no longer required.
- Masks remain required for adult staff and volunteers scheduled in the nursery.
- Chancel Choir members are invited to a pre-rehearsal meeting with Paolo Debuque and Pastor Carol on Wednesday, April 27 from 6:30-7:00 pm for input and discussion to collectively discern the timing of lifting the mask requirement for the Chancel Choir. With the focus on music preparation for Holy Week, this conversation is intentionally deferred until after Easter.
- A section of seating in the sanctuary closest to the organ will be designated “masks and distancing required” as a place for those who wish to worship with less risk from others at close proximity. Tape will remain on the pews in this section to help judge distance.

Effective immediately:

- Pre-registration for worship will end. Attendance will be taken during worship via attendance pads in the pews.
- The nametag table will return to the narthex for you to create a nametag when you arrive. You may take your reusable nametags with magnetic holder with you to carry back and forth for repeated use.
- Tape on pews indicating appropriate distance between households will be removed.
- Small groups will no longer need to register their attendance on the sign-in forms that had been placed in each room; and the “clean pen/dirty pen” holders will be removed.

Critical reminders:

- Please stay home when you are sick, even with mild sniffles or a scratchy throat that appears to be an ordinary cold. Sometimes it takes several days before the coronavirus registers on at-home tests, so we want to protect our friends at church by not exposing them if the cold you have turns out to be COVID-19.
- We encourage all who are eligible to receive the vaccination and all applicable boosters. They really are effective in lessening the symptoms of COVID-19.
- There are numerous hand sanitizer stations throughout the building. Please use them frequently, and try to avoid touching your face.

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- We encourage physical distancing between households as much as possible, with 3-feet being a good guide. This is self-monitored, so please be mindful of others around you.
- For those who continue to wear masks, N95 or KN95 masks are recommended for the greatest protection. Our commitment as a community is to be gracious and respectful towards everyone, regardless of their decision to mask or not.
- When visiting a staff person in their designated office space, please respect their wishes as far as mask wearing goes; otherwise meet in a common area of the building.

An update about refreshments:

- Effective immediately, refreshments may be served in small groups as desired.
- Beginning as soon as a volunteer leader is identified, refreshments may be served for funerals. At this time, the default/preference is for light refreshments to be served outside under the Portico, however the Fellowship Hall will be available as an exception in the case of inclement weather or if a meal is being served.
- Beginning as soon as volunteer leaders are scheduled, refreshments may return on Sunday mornings. Stay tuned for more information to come. At this time, the default/preference is for these light refreshments to be served outside under the Portico, however the Fellowship Hall will be available as an exception in the case of inclement weather.

An update about Holy Communion:

- We will continue using prepackaged individual communion sets until volunteer leaders are in place to prepare and serve cubed bread with individual cups of juice. Even at that time, prepackaged individual communion sets will remain available for those who choose to receive communion elements in that manner.

All along, we have used guidance from the CDC, MN Department of Health, Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, and our own Good Samaritan COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in determining our policies. Most of these entities are now guiding us to use more localized benchmarks. Our benchmarks include Hennepin County statistics as well as hospital and ICU occupancy rates in the entire Twin Cities metro area.

Thank you for your diligence in following the guidelines that have been in place. When the pandemic began, we all joined together to “help us keep Good Sam safe.” This aim remains as we emerge and continue to rebuild our in-person ministries with a welcoming spirit.

Sincerely,



Tony Branch
Church Council Chair



Rev. Carol Zaagsma
Lead Pastor