

St. John's United Methodist Church COVID 19 Protocols

Effective May 23, 2021

Recent updates by the CDC, the South Carolina Governor's Office and SCDHEC have brought us to the long-awaited time when we can significantly relax many of our COVID protocols. We have all been looking forward to this time. From the outset of the pandemic, our COVID protocols have been focused on operating as normally as possible, while making St. John's a safe place to worship, to be in ministry and to serve God and neighbor. We have sought to love our neighbor as ourselves by focusing on not excluding anyone and keeping the most vulnerable safe. CDC Guidance and the S.C. Governor's Office consider the numbers that we have gathering for worship as a large group, therefore, we will continue to be sensitive to those that are at risk and or vulnerable. Beginning May 23, 2021, our worship services will be mask optional. Church attendance is voluntary and, in that light, we encourage those who are not yet ready to return, to continue to watch our streaming services online. Additionally, if you are not feeling well or have a fever, please stay at home. In accordance with our focus on inclusion and in keeping with HIPAA and other laws, we will not be inquiring about health status nor vaccination status of anyone, nor will we ask anyone to sit in a particular place based on their vaccine status.

Worship Services

We will be offering four worship services each Sunday. We will host an 8:30 a.m. traditional service in the sanctuary, a 9:02 a.m. contemporary service in the Faith Center, an 11:00 a.m. traditional service in the sanctuary and a 6:00 p.m. evening vesper service, which will be held outside in the courtyard around the fountain. Our final 11:00 a.m. contemporary service will be held May 23, 2021. We will continue to have shorter services and use the same format that we have been using since August 2, 2020.

COVID Protocols for Worship Services

- Those attending our worship services may use any entrance they wish to use, however, the Faith Center parking lot side entrance to the sanctuary will be locked. The Chesterfield Street entrance will be available for those with an electronic card or code. The back-parking lot entrance, and the windowed open area off of the receptionist space will be open, as will the entrances from the Fountain Plaza. Hand sanitizer will be available, but temperature checks will no longer be taken.
- Seating may be chosen at the discretion of those attending our worship services. We will continue to utilize every other pew for seating and will clearly mark pews that are not to be used for seating. We will be asking those in attendance to please sit at a three-foot distance (a full arm length) from those on your pew if they do not live in your household. Additionally, we will no longer exit beginning in the rear of the sanctuary to the front, you may exit at your discretion.

- We ask that physical contact be limited to protect everyone. Handshakes, hugs, and fist bumps, may be exchanged outside, but not indoors. Our ministers will be greeting our church family and guests as they exit the worship space, but they will be at a safe distance and will not make physical contact. We know that everyone misses greeting their friends and church family, however current guidance encourages no more than 10-minute face-to-face contact. We look forward to the time when this is no longer necessary.
- While masks are optional for those attending worship, our choirs, bands, and soloists will wear masks when singing. There is no new official guidance on protecting against the aerosol effect of singing, therefore to protect our choir, band, musicians, congregation, pastors and all others participating in worship, masks will be worn by said groups and individuals while singing. Vocalists may remove their mask when not singing. Ministers and other individual speakers are not required to wear masks while speaking, because of their 30-foot distance from the congregation and due to the fact that headset microphones negate the effect of aerosols. The congregation may sing softly during hymns and responses using the words on the screens. Use of hymnals, observance of Holy Communion, and other customary elements of worship will resume when it is completely safe to do so.
- Our chancel choir members will continue to maintain a 10-foot distance between themselves and our bands a six-foot distance. Due to the aerosol effect, this step is being taken to keep vocalists, musicians, and worship leaders as safe as possible. Our choir will be limited to 12 (including organist and choir director) in the chancel area of the sanctuary and our 9:02 band will be limited to 9 in the stage area of the Faith Center.
- Bulletins will be available at each of our worship services.
- Attendance registration pads will be in the pews.
- We will continue to collect our offering as we have been since August 2, 2021. Baskets will be available at both side exits and at the center aisle exit, just inside the sanctuary. We also encourage the continued use of electronic giving.
- Our monthly healing service will resume on September 5, 2021.
- Restrooms are available, but please do not linger nor gather in restrooms.

Sunday School and other St. John's Ministries

On May 23, 2021, we will also open most of the facilities for Sunday School and other ministries that have been limited or non-existent since last year! You can use your usual space, but there are a few caveats. If your classroom or meeting space can accommodate 3-foot safe distancing with enough air flow, then mask wearing is optional. If you need additional space or air flow, one of our designated areas like the Gym, Faith Center, Sanctuary, Ward Hall 1, 2 or 3, Chapel or the Conference Room may be used as available. Err on the side of caution, no one should pass

judgement on those who act or think differently. No one knows someone else's complete health history, and we all have one. Additionally, if you wish to prepare your classroom or meeting space prior to May 23, 2021, please know that you will need to do so after 2:30 in the afternoon due to our SEED program classes that will be in session.

Coffee stations, snacks, nor food of any kind will not be served for Sunday School or other ministry or group gatherings inside the church premises until Fall, 2021. A limited number of tents are available for meals or food to be served outside of the gym prior to that time.

Grace Kitchen will continue to serve meals as is currently done. Meals inside the gym can begin September 8, 2021.

Children's Church will resume on August 15, 2021.

Office Access

Access to the church office through the double glass doors that are adjacent to the Fountain Plaza are open immediately. We ask that visits to the reception area and or to the offices or our staff and ministers be limited to no more than ten minutes. Any visits requiring more extensive time may be arranged by making an appointment. Masks are optional while in the hall or offices when a three-foot distance between yourself and others may be maintained. Entrances with key pads may be utilized if you have an electronic card or code.