



Covenant United Methodist Church

20301 PLEASANT RIDGE DRIVE
MONTGOMERY VILLAGE, MARYLAND 20

TELEPHONE: (301) 926-8920 FAX: (301) 926-7782 EMAIL: office@covenant-umc.org

“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are in a transition season in regards to our COVID-19 response and I wanted to give you an update on what you can expect at Covenant UMC over the coming months. Montgomery County Health Department removed all COVID-19 related restrictions on May 28, 2021. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently eased their indoor mask-wearing guidelines for Americans who are fully vaccinated from COVID-19. On May 25th, the Baltimore Washington Conference Reentering Well Task Force offered an update and guidance on how churches might continue to preference life and care for the most vulnerable in their local context. That update was recorded and is available [HERE](#).

Your local Resumption of Activities team met on May 26th to consider our response. Throughout the pandemic, we have sought to follow the most conservative guidance from national, state, and local health agencies, from scientific experts, from our conference, and from the voiced feedback of our families. We continue to pursue a phased approach to reopening that allows us to gradually lessen restrictions even as we seek to provide a safe gathering place for the most vulnerable in our community. Throughout, we have sought to provide an environment that embraces the diverse needs and preferences of our community and respond with solutions that protect the most vulnerable while continuing to offer worship, study, and mission opportunities in person and online as restrictions eased. We were the first United Methodist church in the area to resume in-person worship services last November and have safely done so since then.

We understand that some fully vaccinated individuals in our community are ready to gather in worship without masks, to sing, and to take communion. We also have fully vaccinated folks in our church who are not yet comfortable gathering in the sanctuary or worshipping inside without a mask. We have children who are not yet eligible for the vaccine and adults who have not yet been vaccinated for a variety of reasons. CDC guidance indicates these unvaccinated persons should continue to mask, maintain social distance, avoid large indoor gatherings as well as singing indoors.

With all of the above in our consideration, we have decided that we will move month by month with a gradual easing of restrictions as we gently resume “normal” church activities. Effective May 30, 2021, we are removing the requirement for temperature checks as you come to worship. Throughout June, we will continue to ask all persons to wear masks inside the building for worship and to maintain social distancing except as fully vaccinated folks choose to sit beside one another inside worship. Our capacity limit is currently 73 and we will evaluate this limit

week by week as our need for seats grows. We are easing into live music by having Kathy Herman return to bring us preludes/postludes and incorporate soloists/small groups of vocalists for special music. We will continue our use of prepackaged elements for communion. We are offering a socially-distanced, masked, safe VBS for 24 children. We will have an in-person outdoor Sunday School opportunity for children on June 20th. Finally, we will provide a live-streamed service each week.

In June, we'll be sending you a survey to better understand where each of you are regarding your preferences and comfort around masks, social distancing, singing, and fellowship activities in church. We'll also be monitoring the data as restrictions ease and people gather as well as the latest updates and guidelines from the CDC and local health departments. We anticipate an update to procedures in July.

I have truly been blessed by the way the people of Covenant UMC have joined together to support one another and maintain ministry in these difficult days. The leaders on your Resumption of Activities Team continue to work together to shape a response that meets the needs of our diverse church community. I pray that you are taking advantage of your opportunity to be vaccinated as soon as you are eligible. If you have any questions or concerns about our COVID-19 response, please feel free to contact me at the church office or dawn.stewart@covenant-umc.org.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Dawn