

# Revised COVID 19 Church Guidelines

## Upper New York Conference of The United Methodist Church

### Effective November 17, 2020

	Minimum Standards (NYS Guidelines)	UNY Recommended Best Practice	Resources
<b>Facilities</b>			
<b>Signage</b>	"Post signage throughout the facility to remind individuals to adhere to proper hygiene, social distancing rules, appropriate use of PPE, and cleaning and disinfecting protocols."	Post signage throughout the building telling: what you are doing to keep everyone safe; what is expected of anyone in the building (sign-in sheets for names and phone numbers for contact tracing purposes, use of hand sanitizer, wearing of masks, physical distancing: households may sit together), and cleaning and disinfecting protocols.	<a href="https://forward.ny.gov/religious-and-funeral-services-ny-forward-guidelines">https://forward.ny.gov/religious-and-funeral-services-ny-forward-guidelines</a>
<b>Safety Plan</b>	"Conspicuously post completed safety plan on site."	Post your safety plan where it is easily accessible.	<a href="https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/NYS_BusinessReopeningSafetyPlanTemplate.pdf">https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/NYS_BusinessReopeningSafetyPlanTemplate.pdf</a>
<b>Elevators, Vehicles</b>	Use only if "all individuals are wearing face coverings. If occupied by more than one person, keep occupancy under 50% of maximum capacity."	Masks required; physical distancing maintained (as best as possible); provide and encourage those using an elevator to use cleaning/disinfecting supplies before and after use of shared and frequently touched surfaces (door handles, floor buttons), followed by hand hygiene (hand washing).	
<b>Restrooms</b>	"Tightly confined spaces will be occupied by only one individual at a time, unless all occupants are wearing face coverings. If occupied by more than one person, will keep occupancy under 50% of maximum capacity...Adhere to hygiene and sanitation requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH) and maintain cleaning logs on site that document date, time, and scope of cleaning...Provide and maintain hand hygiene stations for personnel [and guests], including handwashing with soap, water, and paper towels, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60% or more alcohol for areas where handwashing is not feasible...Conduct regular cleaning and disinfection at least after every shift, daily, or more frequently as needed, and frequent cleaning and disinfection of shared objects (e.g. tools, machinery) and surfaces, as well as high transit areas, such as restrooms and common areas, must be completed."	Consult CDC web site for information on cleaning/disinfecting best practices.	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html</a>

<b>Heating and Filtering Systems</b> <b>Sanctuary</b>	<p>NYS provides no guidance.</p> <p>Beginning in October, NYS also started using the "COVID-19 Micro-Cluster Strategy" which may impact areas in UNY with increasing infection numbers. This initiative identifies smaller regions or "micro-clusters" based on infection rates: red, orange, and yellow. Each type of micro-cluster must adhere to particular COVID rules and restrictions:</p> <p><b>Red:</b> lessor of 25% of maximum capacity or 10 people.</p> <p><b>Orange:</b> lessor of 33% of maximum capacity or 25 people</p> <p><b>Yellow:</b> 50% of maximum capacity.</p>	<p>Churches may consult with their department of health and their HVAC vendor to explore options.</p> <p><a href="https://forward.ny.gov/">https://forward.ny.gov/</a></p>
<b>Drop offs and Pick ups</b>	<p>"Establish designated areas for pickups and deliveries."</p>	<p>No other guidance.</p>
<b>Health Screening</b>	<p>"Implement mandatory health screening assessment (e.g., questionnaire, temperature check) for employees, faith leaders, and volunteers (but not attendees), asking about (1) COVID-19 symptoms in past 14 days, (2) positive COVID-19 test in past 14 days, and/or (3) close contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in past 14 days. Responses must be reviewed and such review must be documented."</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> persons who screen positive for COVID-19 symptoms must not be allowed to enter building. Send person home with instructions to contact healthcare provider. Also, notify local health department and follow prescribed contact tracing protocol, including maintaining appropriate confidentiality requirements.</p>	<p>Implement mandatory health screening assessment (e.g. questionnaire, temperature check) for employees of churches, faith leaders and volunteers who will be assisting with ministries, asking about 1. COVID19 symptoms in the past 14 days, 2. positive COVID19 test in the past 14 days, and/or 3. close contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID19 case in past 14 days, 4. if having traveled to a state/territory on the restricted travel list (if yes - self quarantine for 14 days). Utilize the health questionnaire provided by the UNY Conference. <b>NOTE:</b> persons who screen positive for COVID19 symptoms must not be allowed to enter the building. Send person home with instructions to contact healthcare provider. Also, notify local health department and follow prescribed contact tracing protocol, including maintaining appropriate confidentiality requirements.</p>
<b>Worship</b>		
<b>Handshakes/Hugging/ Passing of the Peace</b>	<p>"Prohibit holding or shaking hands of members in different households during the services or prayers."</p>	<p>Congregants should engage in friendly gestures that don't involve touching to greet one another. Waving, bowing, salutes, heart hands, prayer hands, and jazz hands are all acceptable substitutes.</p>

<b>Masks</b>	"Any time employees, volunteers, and/or attendees must come within <b>6 ft</b> of one another (or <b>12 ft., if singing</b> ), they must wear acceptable face coverings, unless they are members of the same household." Everyone "must be prepared to don a face covering if another person unexpectedly comes within 6 ft. (e.g., when walking to seats)."	If people are working, meeting, or worshipping together in shared space, it is recommended that they wear masks as much as possible. Individuals working alone in offices/rooms can remove their masks, though if someone else wishes to speak with them in the room, they should don their masks again.
<b>Shared objects (communion ware, hymnals)</b>	"Limit the sharing of objects (e.g., religious texts, collection plates) as well as the touching of shared surfaces (e.g. pews, instruments, doors, railings); or, require individuals to wear gloves when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched surfaces; or, require individuals to sanitize or wash hands before and after contact."	<b>Hymnal use:</b> 1) disinfect with cleaner between church services. 2) hymnals are not used after worship until next Sunday. This would include for funerals or weddings (or other services between Sundays); This also assumes no one shared hymnals or bible during the service. Each person must have their own hymnal or bible; 3) hymnal alternatives: printing music in the week's bulletin, projecting lyrics on screen/tv (where possible). <b>Collection Plates:</b> Have a few designated locations for collection plates where people can put their offerings rather than passing the collection plate. Wipe down shared surfaces weekly between uses. Utilize gloves if touching shared objects is necessary, or have one designated person hold the object while another uses it (i.e. microphones)
<b>Holy Communion</b>	see guidance on "shared objects."	
<b>Baptism</b>		
<b>Singing (choirs, vocalists)</b>	"Limit activities...unless <b>12 ft</b> of separation can be provided between individuals or additional distancing or physical barriers can reduce transmission of respiratory droplets."	If singing is taking place, masks <b>MUST</b> be worn by the singers.
<b>Singing (congregational)</b>	"...any singing activity must provide for a distance between individuals of <b>12 ft.</b> , subject to additional protective measures."	If singing is taking place, masks <b>MUST</b> be worn by the singers.
<b>Outdoor Worship</b>	"For any religious or funeral service, limit the congregant/attendee capacity to: <b>Phase 1 regions:</b> no more than 10 people indoors or outdoors; <b>Phase 2 and 3 regions:</b> no more than 25 people for services occurring outdoor; <b>Phase 4 regions:</b> no more than 50 people for services occurring outdoor."	Attendees and family groups should sit at least 6 ft apart from one another during outdoor worship.



<b>Parking Lot Worship Fellowship/Coffee Hour</b>	"prohibit shared food or beverages (e.g., self-serve meals and beverages."	Shared food and drink at any church event should continue to be avoided for the duration of the pandemic.
<b>Small Groups</b>		
<b>Small Groups (in-home)</b>	No specific guidance given.	In- homes small groups gathering should be avoided at this time.
<b>Small Groups (in-church), including Sunday School</b>	NYS Forward "Guidelines for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools" may be applicable. See "Resources" column.	Where possible continue to offer an online option to maintain ministry to the most vulnerable and those who feel uncomfortable with in-person gatherings. Offer advanced sign-ups to manage capacity. Be sure there is sufficient room in the gathering area for people to properly spread out 6ft. apart. Keep attendance of those meeting in-person. Attendees should wear masks during the meeting/gathering. Thoroughly clean and sanitize the meeting area after each meeting. No food or drink should be served.
<b>Church Meetings</b>	Same social distancing, mask, hygiene, occupancy, and contact tracing requirements as in-person worship.	Be sure there is sufficient room in the gathering area for people to properly spread out 6ft. apart. Keep attendance of those meeting in-person. Attendees should wear masks during the meeting/gathering. Thoroughly clean and sanitize the meeting area after each meeting. No food or drink should be served.
<b>Food</b>		
<b>Meals (in-church)</b>	No specific guidance given.	No food or drink should be served.
<b>Meals (take-out)</b>	No specific guidance given.	Ensure a minimum of 6ft. is maintained among workers at all time. Masks and other required PPE should be worn by workers at all time. Avoid the use of small spaces by more than one individual at a time. Ensure kitchen staff are designated to one station throughout their entire shift. Encourage customers to wait in their car or outside or a designated room until food is ready to be picked up. Customers are required to wear a mask if waiting in a designated room. Workers should regularly wash hands and comply with federal, state and local food handling hygiene requirements. Regularly disinfect high touch surface.
<b>Kitchen</b>	Same guidance as restrooms.	A minimum of 6ft. should be maintained among workers at all time. Masks and other required PPE should be worn by workers at all time. Avoid the use of small spaces by more than one individual at a time. Ensure kitchen staff are designated to one station throughout their entire shift. Workers should regularly wash hands and comply with federal, state and local food handling hygiene requirements. Regularly disinfect high touch surface areas.
<b>Hosted Activities</b>		
<b>Day-care/nursery/pre-school</b>	NY Forward "Child Care and Day Camp Programs Guidelines" are applicable. See "Resources" column.	Because the circumstances surrounding the operation of pre-schools and day-cares vary, the conference can't offer a universal set of best practices. We advise churches review and adhere to state, school district, and church guidelines with the aim of implementing the highest standards. We further advise churches consult closely with their local department of health.
<b>Hosted groups (AA, AIA non, NA, Scouting, etc.)</b>	Same social distancing, mask, hygiene, occupancy, and contact tracing requirements as in-person worship.	Hosted groups should receive and agree in writing to abide by all requirements stipulated in the church's NY FORWARD SAFETY PLAN. Hosted groups must keep attendance records with contact information to facilitate contact tracing if necessary.
<b>Waivers of Liability</b>	No specific guidance given.	Getting word from chancellor.

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