

# The Details

Because a graphic can only communicate so much, we have put more details about Northeast UMC's COVID-Response plan on this document. If you have questions about these, or need clarification, please contact Pastor Leah (leah@northeastumc.com | 641-780-2070) Pastor Trevor (trevor@northeastumc.com 507-227-5451)

## **We are committed to including ALL**

We recognize that people in our church have different abilities and levels of willingness to use technology, and we have and will continue to do as much as we can to help all levels of people with access, use, and technology to get connected to worship services. We also recognize that people in our church have different levels of tolerance to taking COVID-19 related risks, and we will continue to do as much as we can to be respectful of and accommodate for those differences. We also recognize that our neighbors around us continue to be in spiritual and physical need in this time of COVID-19, and we will continue to do as much as we can do become aware of those needs and create partnerships in responding to those needs.

## **Worship**

The current recommendations for physically distant worship include the following: no singing, no Coffee Hour, no Sunday School, people signing up for worship services, accommodating virtual and in-person worshippers, removing Bibles, hymnals, pens, and information from the pews, taping/blocking off spaces to ensure physical distancing, temperature check all staff and volunteers before worship, have attendees go immediately to the sanctuary when they arrive, and leave the building immediately after worship, no bulletins, and volunteer-led Clean Teams (see below) following EPA-recommended sanitation protocols after each service (protocols include specific cleaners, some of which are required to remain wet on the surface at least one minute before drying).

We believe that implementing all of these recommendations and protocols will likely negatively impact the worship experience, as well as create significant barriers to connecting with one another. Because of that, we have decided to keep worship online/by phone until Phase Two. When we move into Phase Two, we will implement best practice recommendations for worship, and will communicate those clearly and often when we begin this transition.

Returning to worship as we were used to before COVID-19 is the end goal, not the next step. Additionally, we imagine that making worship available virtually and by phone will also remain an essential part of our Sunday worship indefinitely, and we are taking steps to plan and prepare for this reality.

## **When do we transition to different phases?**

As of June 1, 2020, we are in Phase One: Sabbath. We will remain in this phase until there is a 14-day sustained decrease of COVID-19 cases. At that point, we will assess the hospital response capacity, as well as our church's readiness to return to modified in-person worship and to the church building. We will use the following measurements to assess those items:

### **14-Day Sustained Decrease of COVID-19 Cases:**

We will use the data from the Minnesota Department of Health, which you can find online at: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html>

### **Hospital Response Capacity:**

We will be using the data from the State of Minnesota "COVID-19 Response Capacity" data set. This data set informs us about the healthcare system's capacity to treat COVID-19, and because of a love for God and neighbor, we want to do all that we can to ensure our actions do not compromise our healthcare system's capacity to care for people with COVID-19. This data set includes the following measures: Hospital Surge Capacity, Critical Care Supplies, Childcare Capacity, and COVID Funding. Once there is a 14-day sustained decrease of COVID-19 cases, if the hospital response capacity data set informs us that our hospitals have robust capacity to care for COVID-19 patients, we will then assess our church members' readiness to return to the church building. You can find these measures online here: <https://mn.gov/covid19/data/response-prep/response-capacity.jsp>

### **Northeast UMC Readiness:**

We will be assessing if we have the supplies, systems, and personnel in place to ensure a safe return to the building. Once there is a 14-day sustained decrease of cases, and the hospital response capacity remains high, we will survey church members during worship and by phone to assess current levels of COVID-19 risk tolerance, and whether or not the majority of church members feel safe and ready to return to the building, and with what conditions they would be comfortable returning under.

## How will we remain connected to God and community through this time of physical distancing?

We will have weekly community practices that we invite all to participate in as often as they are able. These practices are:

- **Sunday Worship**
- **Learning:**
  - Once a week, a short Bible Study or Book Reflection will be sent out via email (and a monthly version will be mailed to low tech households). If there is enough interest, we may also offer a weekly in-person video and phone call to pray together and discuss our learnings.
- **Justice:**
  - In addition to being responsive to emerging calls for justice, we will be inviting everyone to respond to emerging racial justice actions, and to join Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light's movement of Climate Justice Households. This is a process provides resources and a map to deeply engage individuals and families in the work of climate justice.
- **Service:**
  - Once a week, we will invite you to consider either participating in our Take Home Meals or to make Care Calls to one another. More about Take Home Meals below.
- **Community:**
  - Depending on interest and capacity, we are excited about another round of small groups, similar to what we participated in this winter, yet modified to accommodate COVID-19 risk tolerance levels.

## How does this change Community Meals & Gardening?

### Gardening

- At this time, we encourage people to cultivate their gardens at home, and consider ways to use what you produce to support people in need, bringing your gardening surplus to Little Kitchen Food Shelf, for example. Church gardening will be limited to the church building property only. People may come and garden at the church property if:
  - They are alone, or with someone they live with.
  - They bring their own tools and water bottle, and wear a mask.
  - They remain 6ft from others.
- Building use will be limited only to urgent bathroom trips for gardeners.
- Because the garden is a part of our church's future, we will also be including the garden in our future planning.

### Community Meals --> Take Home Meals

- Community Meals will remain take home meals indefinitely.
- We strongly encourage a system where individuals prep meals from their home, and are picked up or brought to a common drop-off point to then be distributed.
- Community Meals that occur on the second Saturday of the month will continue as long as they follow these guidelines and sanitation and physical distancing protocols.
- New initiatives to feed our community members are also underway, including forging a partnership with a mobile home community. More to come!

## What are current physical distancing and sanitation protocols we should be following?

As of June 1, 2020, there are several measures and protocols that are being recommended. These do change, so for the latest information, consult the Minnesota Department of Health website: [mn.gov/covid19](https://mn.gov/covid19). The current practices and protocols include:

1. If you are sick, stay home.
2. Limiting face-to-face contact is the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you have to be near others, the following are recommended:
  - a. Wear a face covering such as a mask or bandana.
  - b. Stay at least 6ft from others (2 arms length)
  - c. Do not gather in groups
  - d. Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings
  - e. Avoid touching your face while you are around others, and before you've washed your hands.
3. Wash your hands with soap often and for at least 20 seconds, especially if you have been in a public place. Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if no soap and water are available.
4. Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily (this includes electronics such as phones), using detergent or soap and water first, and then cleaning with an EPA-registered household disinfectant. Wear reusable gloves while you are cleaning and dispose of them immediately without touching the outside surface of the gloves.
5. Dispose of cleaning materials in a designated, lined trash can.
6. Regularly launder items that have been in public and/or used frequently.
7. When someone is sick, keep them in a separate part of the house as much as possible. If you suspect your household has experienced COVID-19, or someone has been diagnosed with COVID-19, you can find more cleaning guidance here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>