



**Iowa Conference of The United Methodist Church
Church Building Reentry Checklist
June 1, 2020**

This checklist is a basic guide for the clergy and communities of faith of the Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church to help local church leadership to prepare for the re-entry of clergy, staff, congregations, and community members to your building. While this list addresses main areas for focus, it is certainly not exhaustive, and you may need to address additional issues in your church's preparation. Consider these points as the "minimum" standards for re-entry. *Notify your District Superintendent at least 7 days prior to reopening. This can be done via email.*

Beginning June 1, 2020, each phase (Red-Yellow-Green) shall be determined by the individual church, guided by the IAUMC 1-2-3 Reentry Plan and mandates from the Governor's office. At this time, the standards of Green cannot be met; so local church leadership is discerning their move from Red to Yellow phase.

The Crisis Response Team and Appointive Cabinet encourage the use of this checklist as a guide after thoroughly reviewing the full instructional document and updated FAQ from the Iowa UMC Re-Entry Task Force, which can be found online at <https://www.iaumc.org/123churchreentry>.

Review and Follow the state/national guidelines for faith communities <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/faith-based.html>

PLANNING FOR REENTRY TO THE BUILDING

Meet with church leadership and others (custodial staff, health advisor, etc.) to plan for re-entry (may be done virtually, by phone, email, or another safe method). We encourage this to be a collaborative effort between pastors, lay leaders, and representative(s) from your Staff Pastor Relations Committee, Trustees, and Local Church Council.

- Ensure adequate supply and ongoing ability to obtain needed cleaning/disinfection items and other needed equipment (ex. masks, single-serve communion elements, hand sanitizer). It is believed the virus dies after 5 days on most surfaces, so you may close down your facility to all people for the 5 days preceding worship (i.e., Tuesday-Saturday).
- Determine protocols for gatherings to maintain social distancing such as entry/exit strategies, seating arrangements in worship space, offering collection, distribution of communion elements.
- Provide training to necessary staff/volunteers on updated cleaning standards and safety protocols. We encourage a walk-through rehearsal.
- Contact insurance company for restrictions, recommendations, and requirements related to policy coverages.

GATHERING FOR OUTDOOR WORSHIP (recommended through the summer months)

- Per recommendations from the Governor's office on 4/27/20: "Provide, whenever possible, options to conduct activities from home or through remote audio or video services. Staying at home continues to be the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19. Holding a remote worship service or continuing to offer remote access will help protect those who should continue to avoid gatherings, especially our most vulnerable Iowans with preexisting medical conditions and those older than 65." <https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/61/covid19/Guidance%20-%20Religious%20Facilities%20and%20Places%20of%20Worship.pdf>
- Per recommendations from the Governor's office on 4/27/20: "Consider smaller in-person services or conducting services outdoors. In communicating with congregants about these measures, high-risk individuals should be advised not to attend in-person services. Creative means should be used to deliver services, such as smaller services throughout the week or weekend, outdoor services, or drive-in vehicle events."
- Social Distancing is recommended: 6 feet circumference around each household. Masking is strongly encouraged. Congregational singing and communal liturgy are discouraged outdoors.

GATHERING FOR INDOOR WORSHIP

- Plan around social distancing protocols of 6-foot circumference around households. A guiding rule of reentry in many states is to begin with no more than 25% of capacity for your sanctuary and increase the number of opportunities for worship. Congregational singing and communal liturgy are discouraged indoors.
- Consider the use of "reservations" to plan adequately for seating, adding additional worship services, and holding slots for guests.

- Consider having a “practice” service prior to re-entry to familiarize worship leaders on new practices and identify potential challenges (include all involved in service, including ushers/greeters, musicians, etc.).
- Prior to the first in-person gathering, share plans with all members via appropriate communication routes (email, social media, phone tree, newsletter, etc.)—make re-entry date, procedures regarding entry/exit, social distancing, wearing of masks and other changes known to all.
- Continue current alternative worship opportunities and communicate to church members that they are still available.
- Encourage all congregants to feel free to worship at home using alternative opportunities, but specifically, urge and support at-risk populations and those who have been recently exposed to COVID19 to remain at home.
- Wear masks and have cloth/disposable masks available for church members who need them. The CDC reminds us that masking is critical for those who are asymptomatic carriers of the virus or those who recently contracted the virus. Masks help to capture the aerosols you exhale. Wearing a mask is fully about the care of others in your midst. If traveling between services or buildings, change masks, and follow proper handwashing guidelines.
- Maintain ample hand washing supplies in restrooms and refill sanitizing stations throughout the worship area and facility. Post signage directing people to new hand sanitizing stations.
- Arrange for specified ushers to open all doors, push all elevator buttons, etc.
- Minimize the number of people assisting in worship to only those necessary (fewest needed at entrance/exit points, pulpit, greeting/ushering, handling offerings/communion, etc.)
- Do not share or pass microphones, bibles or other touchable items. Limit the movement of people within service to only what is necessary for entry/exit and seating
- Place necessary signage around the building to communicate new guidelines, encourage good hand hygiene, and explain social distancing measures.
- Thoroughly clean buildings using approved disinfecting chemicals. Pay extra attention to high touch areas such as door handles, handrails, pews, bathrooms, light switches, and microphones. This is for the care of the facility and peace of mind.
- Maintain ample hand washing supplies in restrooms and provide sanitizing stations throughout the worship area and facility.
- Consider closing off non-essential areas of the building and limiting bathroom usage to single occupancy (or close every other stall for social distancing).
- Remove non-essential items from pews and backs of chairs including hymnals, Bibles, attendance record pads, pens, children’s worship bags, etc. Folks can be encouraged to bring their own.

- Arrange for offering drop-off in stationary boxes/ baskets, supply single-serve communion in pews (or for pick-up at the entrance), place bulletins (if necessary) in pews/chairs to indicate social distancing guidelines
- Thoroughly clean building after each public gathering using approved disinfecting chemicals. Pay extra attention to high-touch areas such as door handles, handrails, pews, bathrooms, light switches, and microphones. If multiple services take place, disinfect areas above in-between each service; it is still recommended to have 3-hour breaks between services and time for sanitizing. If your building stays people free for the 5 days preceding worship, you are not obligated to sanitize, though cleaning is always encouraged.
- Notify your District Superintendent at least 7 days prior to reopening. This can be done via email.
- Review practices and adjust protocols as needed

Limit public gatherings in early weeks of re-entry to worship service only—postpone restart of Sunday School, choir rehearsal, children/youth/ nursery programs, and other activities, events, and building usage in Yellow Phase.

HVAC UPDATE

For those with Central Air, experts now agree there is minimal risk that running your HVAC will increase exposure to the virus. Though, it is still recommended to close off spaces not in use during this season of cautious reentry. Experts encourage you to run your central air throughout the week as it helps keep humidity down; humidity keeps the virus airborne longer than the normal 3 hours. If your unit has a de-humidifier option, it is strongly recommended to keep that running.

They further recommend high-efficiency filters that are created for allergens as they can remove particles of equivalent size.

For those with window model air conditioning, it is recommended you do not run the A/C Unit while people are in the building.

Regarding the 5-day break from the sanctuary to allow the virus to die, for facilities with more than one HVAC system (i.e. one for the sanctuary and one for the education/offices wing), staff can be present throughout the week.

There is no clear consensus on the safety of ceiling fans: however, there is agreement that ceiling fans that turn clockwise and pull the air upwards cause the aerosols to stay in the air longer, which is not recommended.

HVAC questions? Go to:

<https://www.nafahq.org/covid-19-corona-virus-and-air-filtration-frequently-asked-questionsfaqs/#What%20filter%20should%20I%20use%20to%20protect%20those%20in%20my%20building%20from%20COVID-19?>