

GREENSTONE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
MULTI-PHASE REOPENING PLAN

The Greenstone United Methodist Church Reopening Task Force is providing this Reopening Plan . The Task Force consists of Pastor Marissa van der Valk, Carol Bloch (Lay Leader), Nancy Catalano (SPRC), Cheryl Leggio (SPRC Chairperson), Candace Lewis (Pres., Bd of Trustees), Joshua Mannix (Youth Ministries Coordinator), Heidi Noctor (Admin. Council Chairperson), and David Read (Finance Committee Chairperson).

It should be understood that this plan is not intended to function as a legal document, but rather as a guide – a road map of sorts – for helping the congregation move through this unprecedented time. This plan is, for the most part, without timeline, but will be followed in close consultation with the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference and in conjunction with state/federal government guidance and/or orders. Where ambiguity may exist, it is for the purpose of allowing for “best practices” to be adjusted if necessary.

Ultimately, as the Body of Christ and as a Christian church, we have a mandate greater than any civil law, and that is to care for God’s creation, including, without question, the health and lives of our congregation and our neighbors. This plan is guided by John Wesley’s “Three Simple Rules”, which provides a message and methodology of how to approach our plan. “DO NO HARM. DO GOOD, STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD.”

As we move through this plan, it is important to note that there is always a possibility that conditions will not improve as hoped for, and that infections will increase and/or other public health requirements may not be met. Should this happen, this plan may need to be amended, delayed, and/or precautions tightened for a period of time. If necessary, the church may need to retreat to a previous phase. Conversely, the mysterious nature of this pandemic may make it possible for the plan to be accelerated. In other words, the plan may not unfold in a linear fashion.

*\*Please note that, throughout each phase of this plan, all persons who are considered to be higher risk individuals (i.e. age 65+ and/or those with underlying health conditions) are encouraged to continue sheltering in place. If the higher-risk individuals choose to be present and follow the plan’s guidelines, it is important that they understand the potential risk they assume.*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions.index.html>

## **Phase 1**

This phase is in conjunction with Governor Murphy’s “Stay at Home” order and is advised by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. Since Governor Murphy has

recently lifted the “Stay at Home” order, this plan will only be enacted should the order be re-instated or the church task force team decides to reinstate it.

We will continue holding worship services on Facebook and YouTube. The pastor will coordinate the pre-recorded services with the worship team. Each member or “family unit” will record their piece of the service separately and each part will then be edited together.

- All Bible studies, small groups, and committees will continue to meet remotely (i.e. online via Zoom) as possible and necessary. Groups not already doing so are encouraged to explore this possibility.
- Pastoral Care will be continued remotely using set “Here for You” hours and/or other procedures determined by the lead pastor.
- Regular communication with the congregation will continue through regular church emails and occasional mailings, as necessary.
- Minimal office drop-in by staff and select volunteers for only essential business operations. This will be coordinated between the pastor and staff/volunteers and the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC).
- The Caring Cupboard will continue to provide outdoor pantry cabinet service for the community on a 24/7 basis.
- All offerings and financial donations will be conducted either through our online giving option or by US Mail.

During this phase, the building will remain closed for all other activities and purposes. Custodial services will continue, primarily for areas being used by the volunteers and those conducting essential business operations.

## **PHASE 2- We will begin this phase August 2**

### **Outdoor Worship**

**INTRO:** Below is the safety plan that will be followed for the outdoor worship service. We are asking for everyone’s cooperation in following the practices listed below. If you do not feel you can cooperate with the guidelines, please do not attend. **IF YOU ARE IN A HIGH-RISK GROUP INCLUDING THOSE OVER AGE 65 AND THOSE WITH UNDERLYING HEALTH ISSUES, PLEASE STRONGLY CONSIDER NOT ATTENDING.** A recorded worship service will be posted on the webpage and Facebook for those who do not attend.

#### **BEFORE ATTENDING:**

- 1) Please notify the church office if you plan to attend. There will be a sign-up sheet sent out to the congregation.
- 2) Please only travel with folks who are in your household/family group.
- 3) Bring a mask for everyone attending. (If you do not have a mask please alert an usher)  
-The mask must be put on before exiting the car and be worn at all times while attending the outdoor service.

4) Bring a lawn chair – no seating will be provided.  
5) Restrooms will be available, please see an usher who will direct you which door and route to take.

5) Review the following screening questions before leaving home and if you or anyone in your family answers **YES** to **ANY** of them, PLEASE do not attend the service.

I. Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days?

II. Is there anyone in your household who is ill or has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

III. Have you been in contact with anyone who is ill, shown symptoms, or has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

IV. Have you traveled to or from any of the states listed under the restricted travel advisory within the past 14 days? As of July 15 these states include: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin

V. Do you currently have a temperature above 100.4 F?

VI. Are you experiencing any of the following: new cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, sore throat, new muscle aches or headaches, gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e. diarrhea, vomiting, etc.), chills or repeated shaking with chills, or a new loss of taste or smell?

**UPON ARRIVAL:**

- 1) Please put on your mask before leaving the car.
- 2) Avoid physical contact with anyone you did not travel with you.
- 3) An usher who will direct you where to set up your chairs and perform a temperature check.
- 4) The usher will record the names of everyone in your group in order to assist with contact tracing if necessary.

**DURING THE SERVICE:**

- 1) There will be no moving around during worship. Please stay in your chair.
- 2) There will be no congregational singing or spoken responses. There will be a single singer/liturgist who will sing/speak the congregational elements of worship on behalf of those present.
- 3) An offering will not be taken during the service. Offerings can be placed in baskets/boxes provided after the service has ended.

**AFTER THE SERVICE:**

- 1) Each person/family group will be dismissed by an usher with those closest to the parking lot dismissed first.
- 2) Offerings may be placed in the offering box on the way to the car.
- 3) Avoid physical contact with those who did not travel with you.
- 4) Please return directly to your car.
- 5) If at any point in next two (2) weeks you or anyone in your family begins to experience symptoms, please contact Pastor Marissa immediately. It is also recommended that you seek medical attention as soon as possible.

**Ushers will undergo training on the no touch thermometers and all the procedures that need to be followed before, during and after the service. If we cannot find enough ushers or helpers to aid with the service, we will suspend outdoor service and continue online.**

**Bible Studies, Small Groups, Youth Group and Leadership/Ministry Teams:**

- All small group gatherings and Leadership & Ministry Teams are to continue meeting remotely until further notice.
- No building rentals will be permitted.
- In-person Vacation Bible School will be postponed/cancelled until deemed safe to regather.
- Youth group will continue to meet weekly on Zoom.

**Church Business:**

- Minimal office drop-in by staff and select volunteers for only essential business operations. This will be coordinated between the pastor and staff/volunteers and the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC).
- A log will be kept in the office with names of all those who enter the building each day.

**PHASE 3 – We are hoping to begin this phase on Sunday September 13**

Phase 3 will begin with the following considerations: New Jersey allows for in-person gathering not exceeding 50 people and a recommendation from the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference and the Bishop's office is made for in-person gathering not exceeding 50 people.

During this third phase, we will begin to make a shift toward in-person worship and regular office functions. The allowance at this phase include:

**In-Person Worship:**

- In-person worship will not exceed 50 people in attendance.
- The in-person worship service will be live-streamed and made available in online forums.
- The sanctuary will be cleaned and sanitized before each gathering. Seat backs, door handles, and touch surfaces. In addition, there will be hand sanitizer stations at the designated entrance and exit doors.
- As you enter the doors, there will be masks and offering plates. This will eliminate passing any of those items hand to hand and cross contamination. A greeter will be there to help and direct.
- All hymnals and pew bibles and other items will be removed from the pews before In-person worship begins.
- The entire sanctuary will be open for seating with sections marked off for social distancing of at least 6 feet with the following general rule; “If you live together, you may sit together.” There will be assigned seating. We ask that you react to this with love and understanding even if you do not share concerns of some.
- All people in attendance will be required to wear a face mask. Appropriate masks will be supplied for anyone without one of their own.
- The celebration of Holy Communion and the consumption of the elements will be available in pre-packaged containers. No contact must also be attended to as distribution of elements for communion is a risk to the communion steward as well as the recipient. The elements must be provided by gloved stewards and placed in recipient’s open hands during that period of the service.
- Temporarily, to follow social distancing guidelines, after worship fellowship and refreshments will be closed.
- Sunday School will be closed until we can evaluate guidelines for best practices for children.
- The Sacrament of Baptism will be limited. No skin-to-skin contact is recommended during baptisms; it is recommended that parents hold babies and small children as the pastor performs the rite.
- Certain temporary practices for worship will be implemented in order to decrease the risk to all those present. They include, but are not limited to:
  - Refraining from congregational singing as it increases the likelihood of virus transmission via droplets, even with masks.
  - There will be no-touch alternatives for collecting the offering.
- Only the Garden entrance will be utilized on Sunday mornings. The church will be opened to the congregation 10 minutes prior to worship and closed 10 minutes following the service’s conclusion. All those in attendance will be dismissed by row in order to exit the church immediately after the worship service concludes. The Fellowship Hall and classrooms will be closed on Sunday mornings. Mingling in the parking lot is strongly discouraged.
- The assigned ushers for each Sunday will remain in the entrance area during the worship service performing the following duties before, during and after the service:

- Stand near the entrance prior to the service and provide a mask to those without one, already.
- The ushers will show each congregation member their assigned seat
- Ensuring everyone sanitizes their hands upon entering the sanctuary.
- Keeping an accurate headcount and limit attendance to 50 people
- Monitor offering receptacles.
- Funeral and memorial services can take place with careful attention to maintaining physical distancing measures, mandatory masks for each person, and keeping the attendance under 50 people – perhaps with consideration given to encouraging family to invite only close family and close friends for the service. Please note that Repasts cannot be held in the Fellowship Hall until further notice.

Bible Studies, Small Groups, Youth, and Leadership/Ministry Teams:

- All small group gatherings and Leadership & Ministry Teams are to continue meeting remotely until further notice.
- No building rentals will be permitted.
- In-person Vacation Bible School will be postponed/cancelled until deemed safe to regather.
- Youth group will continue to meet weekly on Zoom. They will also meet once a month outside, a separate plan will be in place for the youth, which will be given to parents ahead of time.

Church Business:

- Only the east entrance of the Education Building will be open during posted office hours.
- Regular office functions and hours can resume with attention paid to maintaining physical distancing, wearing masks, and regular sanitizing. All persons entering the building are required to wear appropriate masks and maintain physical distance.
- A log will be kept in the office with names of all those who enter the building each day.

Physical Building Considerations:

- Signs will be posted at the entrances with the following information:
  - Symptoms of COVID-19, urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if symptoms are present. (Note: persons with symptoms are not permitted to remain in the building).
  - Proper mask wearing & care.
  - Hand washing signs will be located in each restroom above the sink, along with a reminder on the inside of the bathroom door(s).
- Hand sanitizing stations will be located at the Garden entrance, office entrance, both entrances to the Fellowship Hall and other areas where people may enter.
- The sanctuary will be cleaned following the Sunday worship service.

- If anyone who is in the building, regardless of when they were present, tests positive for COVID-19, the pastor will be in contact with health officials (i.e. State or County Health Department as well as their District Superintendent) in order to cooperate with contact tracing and/or other necessary measures.
  - In the event this occurs, all in-person church activity will be suspended until proper cleaning has been performed and it is deemed safe to resume.
  - In the event this occurs, the congregation will be informed via email according to health officials' recommendations.
- The Caring Cupboard will continue to provide outdoor cabinet pantry service for the community.

#### Next Phases –

At this time, additional phases are not articulated, simply because it is difficult at this point to know exactly what these phases will look like. Ideally, these phases would provide us with an increasingly clear picture of an emerging “new normal” for the church. As time goes on, masks may be necessary, as may be some social distancing. It is possible that limits on gathering sizes may loosen. As these additional phases emerge, the pastor and church leadership will be in consultation with health officials, the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, and others in order to help define those phases more concretely.