



Back to the Building Protocol

The mission of Bartlett United Methodist Church is to know Christ and to make Christ known to all people through worship, education, and service in our community and throughout the world. Announcing his ministry's purpose, Jesus said he came to bring life in abundance (Jn 10.10). Part of this is protecting and contributing to that which keeps people and creation well. As those whose mission begins with knowing Christ and making him known, we're to follow his patterns for doing that which facilitates life.

Moreover, John Wesley named the first of the general rules given to the early Methodist societies as "do no harm": to avoid anything that'd be a detriment spiritually or physically to oneself or one's neighbor.

As such—especially in this time of COVID-19 pandemic—we take seriously the health and safety of our congregation, our community, and ourselves, and are committed to creating and maintaining an environment which makes these a top priority. Guided by prayer, denominational wisdom, local government regulations, and advice of physicians, we affirm and will adhere to this protocol (which is primarily attentive to Sunday morning gatherings) for reentering our in-person interactions as a faith community.

We recognize that this protocol may seem excessive to some; it may likewise seem insufficient to others. We further recognize that out of love for one another and anxiousness to gather, we will desire to relate in close and affectionate ways. However it is precisely *because* of our love for one another that we're to apply the standards here, in order that we might keep each other as safe as possible.

If any person who's attended our in-person worship is subsequently known to have tested positive for COVID-19, in-person worship will once again be suspended for at least two weeks. All material in this document is subject to revision, as new information becomes available.

Before We Open

- At least three months supply of needed cleaning/sanitizing supplies will be on hand.
- All floors will be cleaned.
- All door handles and frequently-touched surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized.
- Guidelines and instructions will be emailed to the congregation and posted on social media at least 10 days in advance of our first gathering.

Before You Come

- Be attentive to the whole of this document; its points are to be read as expectations, especially where the language used is *must* or *will*.
- There is no insistence that you attend as soon as our doors open. If for any reason you need or prefer to continue worshiping from home, please do so.
- If you feel unable to adhere to the standards in this document, you're asked to worship from home until such time as the standards are changed or relaxed.
- If you're in a vulnerable population due to demographic or significant underlying medical condition, or if you will require childcare during worship, you may wish to delay your return.
- If you are sick or showing symptoms of COVID-19, if someone in your household has tested positive for COVID-19 or has a test result pending, or if you've been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the last fourteen days, please stay home. Symptoms include¹:
 - Cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - A fever (100.4° or above) or chills
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Fatigue
 - Headache
 - Muscle or body aches
- Bring a face mask for you and every member of your household 2+ years of age. Be prepared to put them on before you enter the building.²
- Consider bringing a small bottle of hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol.³
- Consider bringing a writing utensil, as pens and pencils will not be in the pew racks.
- Be prepared to observe social distancing guidelines, maintaining at least 6' between you and non-household members.⁴

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

General Logistics

- At social distancing guidelines, our sanctuary can accommodate approximately 240 people (approximately 80 seating units).
- To accommodate lining up pre-worship, and to allow ample time between services for sanitizing, worship start times will temporarily be shifted to 8:45 AM and 11:15 AM. Start time and number of services may shift as attendance numbers necessitate.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be placed at the north entrance of Oaks Hall, entrances to the sanctuary, and the bottom of the balcony stairs.
- To decrease points of contact and be mindful of social distancing, elevators will not be operational. Persons who wish to sit in the balcony will need to be able to use the stairs.
- Worship services will be under an hour (ideally, about 45 minutes) in length.
- We will not use hymnals, Bibles, or writing utensils normally found in the pew racks.
- We will not pass attendance pads. We're looking into use of an attendance tracking app or software with which persons can check in.
- Speakers will remain in the chancel for worship (as opposed to being stationed on the floor for the later service). A partition of clear plexiglass will be placed in front of all speaking stands.
- Spoken/responsive liturgy will be very minimal.
- We will not share the peace via physical contact. You are encouraged to wave or to nod toward those in your vicinity.
- All forms of physical contact (handshakes, hugs, etc.) with non-household family members are *strongly* discouraged.
- Children will not gather on the steps for the children's message, nor be dismissed to children's church. Their attentiveness is encouraged from their seats.
- To reduce points of contact and movement of persons, we will not incorporate acolytes or use the prayer bowl.
- There will be no kneeling at the chancel rail.
- There will be no coffee/donut cart.
- Nursery care will temporarily not be available for either service.
- We will not print and distribute bulletins to guide our services. Announcements and liturgy will be projected on-screen. (Bulletins will however be emailed and may be printed by individuals; please take them with you as you leave.)
- Pew backs and arms, door handles/knobs, and restrooms will be sanitized between services.

Hospitality Team

- Team members will complete screening (wellness questions and temperature taking) every week.
- Team members will wear face masks.
- Team members will be stationed in the parking lot, at the north doors of Oaks Hall, and in the sanctuary to direct and assist people.
- Team members will direct people in seating.

Entering/Exiting the Building

- Observe all signage outside and inside of the building for direction and instruction. Screening signs, listing the above-named symptoms, will be in place.
- Attend to the guidance of the ushers.
- All persons 2+ years of age will be required to wear face masks; as stated above, please bring one for you and every member of your household. Face masks in sealed plastic baggies will be provided for persons who don't have one.
 - A significant portion of individuals with COVID-19 are asymptomatic, and the virus can be transmitted even before symptoms are shown; moreover the virus tends to be spread by persons interacting in close proximity or in areas with insufficient ventilation.
 - Because of this, the CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.⁵
 - If you're provided with a face mask, you're to take it with you when you leave and (if not disposable) to use it subsequently.
- All persons will enter through the doors under the portico on the building's north side. Special parking will be allotted for those who need closer spaces, and assistance will be made available. Persons who are able to walk greater distances are encouraged to park farther away and reserve closer spots for those who might need them.
- A socially-distanced (6' between persons/small families) line up outside of the building will begin 30 minutes prior to the start of each worship service. Same-household family members should group together. Watch for markings on the ground, which will indicate appropriate distance.
 - COVID-19 spreads among people who are in close contact for a prolonged period. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and droplets from their mouth or nose travel through the air to persons nearby. According to the CDC, social distancing helps to limit opportunities to come in contact with contaminated surfaces and infected people.⁶
- A team of persons will be stationed outside of the building to check temperatures with touchless forehead thermometers. If your temperature is found to be 100.4^o or above, you and those with you will be asked to return home and to monitor your temperature and other symptoms for 14 days prior to rejoining in-person worship.
- One door will be designated entry for persons who need to be seated on the sanctuary's main level; the other will be designated for persons who will be seated in the balcony. *Please see below for seating regulations and logistics.*
- One person/family at a time, per door, will be directed in by ushers; they are to proceed across Oaks Hall to enter the sanctuary, or to the stairs on the east side of Oaks Hall to move to the balcony.

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

⁶ Ibid.

- After worship, rows will be dismissed one at a time, starting with persons seated in the balcony. The hospitality team will help to maintain 6' between persons as they begin to move.
- All persons are strongly encouraged to sanitize their hands before leaving.
- Hospitality team members will be in place in Oaks Hall to direct people out of the building.

Seating

- As in-person worship attendance remains low, persons may sit where they choose as guided by the hospitality team.
- As attendance increases, main-level seating will be reserved for persons 60+ years of age, or with mobility restrictions or other special needs. All others will be directed to the balcony. (Anyone who judges themselves able may sit in the balcony.)
- Persons seated in the balcony are to begin filling in seating at the front row of their section. 6' must be between you and anyone on your row with whom you don't share household.
- Persons seated on the main level are to begin filling in seating at the 3rd seating block from the front; this is to ensure that persons who may arrive late but who need main-level seating will have a spot. 6' must be between you and anyone on your row with whom you don't share household.
- Once a row is filled (generally, individuals/small families seated at either end and in the middle), skip *two rows* and begin a new one. Pews that aren't to be used will be indicated with a taped X on both ends.
- Hospitality team members will help to direct seating.

Tithes/Offering

- Offering plates will not be passed.
- Baskets/plates will be placed at the side pillars of the sanctuary, at the outermost doors that exit into Oaks Hall, and between the doors that exit into the parking lot for contributions to be dropped off.
- All persons are strongly encouraged to participate in online giving (www.bartlettumc.org/give) or to mail their contribution to the church office.

Music

- In order to observe social distancing guidelines, the choir will not gather in the loft; the band will not gather in their space.
- "Special music" may be offered by soloists, duets, trios, handbells, etc. provided appropriate social distancing from each other and the congregation can be adhered to.
- We will limit congregational singing to one piece near the end of worship.
 - Data have shown that singing, especially in groups, may be a particular risk for spreading COVID-19, as singers are considered "super spreaders"; the depth and rate of their breathing and the ways in which they project

(which is significantly different from speaking) can push droplets much further than 6'.⁷

- Studies and other observations have suggested that advance screening, staying at socially-distanced spacing with face masks, and limiting exposure to potential particles to less than 30 minutes, decreases risk of transmission by singing.^{8 9}

Communion

- Prepackaged elements (according to the number in a party) will be placed in sealed plastic baggies and handed to worshipers as they enter the sanctuary.
- Servers will have sanitized their hands and will wear face masks as they distribute.
- We will not observe the sharing of the sacrament at the conclusion of each worship service.
- To open the elements package:
 - Bend the pointed end of the package's top; you'll hear a slight "crack."
 - Peel back the thin first layer of plastic to expose the wafer.
 - Peel back the second layer of plastic to expose the juice.
- Do not handle or open the elements of any non-household member; worship leaders will be prepared to sanitize hands and assist with opening if necessary.
- Wastebaskets will be placed in various locations to dispose of your empty package.

Baptism

- Parents and officiant will be required to wear face masks for the duration of the liturgy.
- Parents will hold the child for the duration of the liturgy, including during the baptism proper.
- Water will be poured/sprinkled from a shell, as opposed to the officiant's hand.

Restrooms

- We will encourage not more than two users at a time.
- Some sinks, urinals, etc. will be "taped off" to help maintain appropriate social distancing.
- Persons must wear face masks even while in the restroom, and observe social distancing.
- Persons must wash hands after use.

Small Groups/Classes

- Plans are presently being developed for resuming in-person, onsite small group gatherings/meetings, including Sunday school classes.

⁷ [https://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997\(20\)30245-9/fulltext](https://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997(20)30245-9/fulltext)

⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/10/888945949/is-singing-together-safe-in-the-era-of-coronavirus-not-really-experts-say>

⁹ [https://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997\(20\)30245-9/fulltext](https://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997(20)30245-9/fulltext)

- Small groups/classes are encouraged to continue meeting via Zoom, FaceTime, Facebook Rooms, Microsoft Teams, or other virtual platforms to remain connected and to share learning and fellowship.
- Socially-distanced gatherings may take place in homes, parks, or other areas. These gatherings should continue to observe all wellness precautions (social distancing, no physical contact, frequent washing/sanitizing of hands, coughing/sneezing into the inner elbow, and refraining from participation if sick).

Online Presence

- Worship services will continue to be available via Facebook and YouTube every Sunday at 10:15 AM. We're examining options and opportunities to maximize the worship experience for persons who can't physically attend.
- Midday prayer will continue to be offered via Facebook Live, Monday through Thursday at noon.
- 3 Minute Methodism will continue to be offered monthly on YouTube and shared to Facebook and other social media.
- Other ministry areas (Bible studies, music, youth, children, preschool, recreation) will be responsible for examining the viability/necessity of creating or continuing their online offerings.