



United Methodist Church

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 continued 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 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 and/or Sunday school is subsequently known to have tested positive for COVID-19, in-person worship and Sunday school will be suspended for at least two weeks to prevent spread. All material in this document is subject to revision, as new information becomes available and as context necessitates.

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 in-person worship or Sunday school. If for any reason you need or prefer to continue worshipping or learning from home, please do so.
- If you feel unable to adhere to the standards in this document, you're asked to worship and learn 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, you may wish to delay your attendance.
- If you are sick or showing symptoms of COVID-19, if you or 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. This holds true even if you're fully vaccinated.¹ Symptoms include²:
 - 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, covering nose and mouth, before you enter the building.³
- Consider bringing a small bottle of hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol.⁴
- Consider bringing a writing utensil, as pens and pencils will not be in the pew racks.
- Be prepared to observe social distancing guidelines in all spaces, maintaining 6' between you and non-household members as much as possible.⁵

General Logistics

- At social distancing guidelines, our sanctuary can accommodate approximately 240 people (approximately 80 seating units).
- Worship start time and number of services, as well as Sunday school start time and location, may shift as attendance numbers necessitate. Beginning April 11, 2021, we will have two worship services, one at 8:20 AM and one at 10:50 AM;

¹ The CDC defines "fully vaccinated" as two weeks beyond your second dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, and two weeks beyond your single dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

the earlier will tend toward traditional style and the later will tend toward contemporary. Sunday school will start at 9:30 AM.

- 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, please limit the number of passengers on elevators—ideally, no more than two non-related persons.
- Worship services will be around an hour in length.
- We will not use hymnals, Bibles, or writing utensils normally found in the pew racks.
- We will not pass attendance pads.
- 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 speakers.
- We will not share the peace via physical contact. You are encouraged to wave or nod or offer other appropriate gestures 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. Their attentiveness is encouraged from their seats.
- There will be no group kneeling at the chancel rail.
- There will be no coffee/donut cart.
- While print bulletins will be available, liturgy and other items pertinent to worship will be projected on the screen.
- Pews, door handles/knobs, restrooms, and other high traffic or high touch areas will be sanitized between services.

Hospitality Team

- Team members are expected to self-screen their wellness prior to participating.
- Team members will wear face masks.
- Team members will be at the north doors of Oaks Hall and in the sanctuary to guide and assist people.

Entering/Exiting the Building

- Observe all signage outside and inside of the building for guidance. Screening signs, listing the above-named symptoms, will be in place. If you’re experiencing any of these symptoms, you’re asked to stay or return home.
- 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.⁶
- 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.
- As stated above, everyone is expected as much as possible to maintain 6' between themselves and others with whom they don't live. 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 encounter contaminated surfaces and infected people.⁷
- All persons are strongly encouraged to sanitize their hands before leaving.

Seating

- Persons may sit where they choose in pews that are open, and will not be guided to their seat unless they need assistance finding one. Open pews are those which are *not* marked with a green slash on the ends.
- The social distancing guidelines stated above are to be applied with regard to seating (6' between yourself and those with whom you don't live).

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. If assistance is needed, the church office should be contacted.

Music

- The band and choir (or subsets thereof) and other musical ensembles or performers will observe the social distancing guidelines named above.
- We will limit congregational singing to two pieces per service.
- 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}

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

⁷ Ibid.

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)

Communion

- Prepackaged elements (according to the number in a party) will be placed in sealed plastic baggies and given 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 (and older candidates) will be required to wear face masks for the duration of the liturgy.
- In the case of baptism of infants, parents may choose to hold the child for the duration of the liturgy, including during the baptism proper, or to allow the officiant to hold the child 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.

Sunday School & Other Groups/Classes

- All classes and groups are expected to adhere to the basic protocols described in this document (self-screening before in-person attendance/participation, wearing of face masks while in the building, observance of social distancing, and washing/sanitizing hands).
- While in classrooms or meeting spaces, speakers may remove face masks if they're behind a partition.
- In general, communal food and drink are not to be shared. A written request and plan for doing so must be approved by pastoral leadership.

Online Presence

- Worship services will continue to be available via Facebook and YouTube every Sunday at 10:15 AM.
- Midday prayer will continue to be offered via Facebook Live, Monday through Thursday at noon.
- 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.

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