



## **Guyton UMC Return to Worship COVID19 Policy**

(updated 11/27/2020)

**Return to Sunday worship June 28, 2020 implementing responsible Social Distancing.**

**Letting people know we will gather with no physical contact (hugs & handshakes) and that those who are vulnerable to infection, or have symptoms of illness, or do not feel comfortable coming to remain at home.**

**WHY such strict guidelines? The safety of our congregation and the well-being of our high-risk church members is of the utmost importance. COVID19 is very contagious and there is still much about the virus and its risks that we do not know.**

**People's responses to this pandemic vary from no-concern to very-seriously-concerned.**

**Regardless of your response to the crisis, please follow these guidelines out of respect and care for other church members.**

### 1. What services are we going to have and what will they look like?

We now offer an 11am Sunday worship service with people spaced out 6 feet apart in the sanctuary with their spouses/family units. Sunday School and Sunday School assembly will not meet but will be phased in during the month of July depending on how things go.

Congregants are asked to wear masks (cloth or disposable) until further notice.

Social Distancing guidelines are to still be practiced outside of the church, talking in the parking lot or walking to our vehicles.

Conversations with leaders of church groups (Youth, Wednesday gatherings) will take place about a timetable to phase in their ministry work.

### 2. What adjustments will you make to the Lord's Supper, baptisms, and your choir ministry?

We will wait until further notice to celebrate Holy Communion again; Holy Communion will be with individual cups and with pre-cut bread to avoid person-to-person contact.

Choir will already be on its Summer break when we get back so it will not meet for rehearsals again until mid-August, however returning to rehearsals and performances depends on if our worship has resumed congregational and group singing. When we do resume rehearsals and performances will reflect social distancing with some in the choir loft and others spaced across the front of the church.

Baptisms will be scheduled with the pastor to ensure a date and a procedure that the family is comfortable with.



3. Will there be a physical “pass the plate” offering?

Donation collection in front and back of the church with instructions given during the worship service will replace passing the plate.

4. What are you doing now to sanitize and sterilize your church building?

JaniKing will continue to clean the church weekly. Sprays and disinfectant cloths are on hand for needed disinfecting during gatherings should it be determined it is needed.

5. Are you going to continue offering children’s church?

We will wait to reintroduce children's church and nursery ministries because these ministries represent a challenge to maintain social distancing.

6. Are you going to continue hosting special events?

Weddings and funerals with same precautions as Sunday worship. When the Scouts get ready to return we will have a conversation about practices they will have in place for social distancing. Also, we will wait until further notice before programs that serve food resume at the church.

7. Will you continue offering virtual online worship?

We will maintain our online programming during this time.

8. Do door greeters do their jobs differently, or at all?

Ushers will not crowd entrance way, will not hand out bulletins, but will greet people from a safe distance and let them know where they can pick up a bulletin and be on hand to answer any questions that people have.

19. Church greeting time?

Greeting time is not part of our worship service when we initially return. When it does resume we will have our greeting time - but just say hi instead of hugging and shaking hands.

10. Because people may return very slowly to church, how will you count attendance and effectiveness?

Look to guidelines provided by the Annual Conference on how to record accurate numbers.

11. Should you add and/or shorten worship services to allow for social distancing?

Our regular order of worship for our services has been changed since we will not initially have congregational singing.

12. What are you going to do about larger Sunday School groups?

Sunday School will not immediately come back. When Sunday School comes back, since the Family Class (Tony's Class) has an issue of tight quarters, we will talk to them about meeting in sanctuary for the time being.

13. Do you have a plan for reducing expenses if your church’s offerings don’t rebound?



If we start seeing financial Red Flags the Finance Committee will have a called meeting over the Zoom app to address the situations.

14. How will you deal with the possible rise of COVID-19 related mental health issues or addictions?

If people find an increased need for counselling or psychological help I will make different resources in the county available to church members.

15. Are you going to cancel mid-week Wednesday night services, meals, and Bible studies?

Plans to phase in Sunday School and Wednesday activities (Bible Studies, needlework) will be discussed with church leadership and will be decided upon when conditions improve.

16. Should you be investing in new digital equipment right now?

I (Matt) own a smaller video camera that will be used to video our in person services, new video editing software was recently purchased and is starting to be used more in our videos. Other than that we are not planning to make major investments in digital equipment.

17. Should a person come to in-person worship if they have been exposed to COVID19 or have COVID19?

We are asking all members of our church community to first and foremost follow all instructions regarding quarantine and contact tracing from local health officials. For those infected with COVID19, a person needs a documented negative COVID test before returning to in-person worship. If in a household shared by multiple members of the Guyton UMC community where a person is infected, we ask that all household members test negative before a members of the household return to in-person worship. For those who know they have been directly exposed to the virus, or have been contacted by local health officials and asked to quarantine, we respectfully ask that that person refrain from attending in-person worship for 2 Sundays since their known contact with the virus or get a documented negative test before returning to in-person worship.

18. What about the Outdoor Advent study or other outdoor activities?

The Outdoor Adevnt study begins Sunday November 29 from 9:30-10:30 and will run for 4 Sundays. Participants will gather around the Gazebo, parking their vehicles as they usually would for an event at the Beulah House. Some chairs will already be set up, but additional chairs will also be stored in the Gazebo. If people are more comfortable in a folding chair brought from home by all means bring them! If you want coffee please bring some in your own mug of thermos. Please generously space out your chairs in a way to keep a safe distance form others but near enough to hear others speaking. Being outside means less risk for COVID19 spread, therefore masks will be optional. Some may choose to continue wearing masks, other will choose not to - regardless we know that the focus will be on the lesson and not on who is or isn't wearing a mask. In the event of cold weather or rain the class will move into the Social Hall where a mandated 6 foot distance will have to be observed. The side double-door will open to increase airflow if weather is not too severe. Please note that an outdoor event that has been moved inside due to weather will still have masks as optional as a way of providing ministry options to church members who find that they cannot wear masks. It is one of the few exceptions to our masks-



while-indoors policy, it does not mean a change of policy regarding Sunday morning worship services. As always if you show any symptoms of general sickness please stay home, if your are uncomfortable with these guidelines for our Advent Study you may want to find other opportunities at Guyton UMC to plug into. This class will begin promptly at 9:30am and end promptly at 10:30am. See you there!

**(subject to change according to State and Federal guidelines and/or direction from the leadership of the South Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church)**