

Church Reopening and Resuming In-Person Worship Plan

As we begin looking forward to the reopening of businesses in our state, we are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to return to in-person worship. As many of you are aware, the Governor has made recommendations for reopening some businesses and that first phase has begun. **As a United Methodist Church, we must also follow the guidelines and directives set forth by our Bishop.** There have been many conversations leading up to this point as the safety and health of our congregation is our top priority. Our Bishop has recommended the implementation of Healthy Church Teams to oversee the many processes and protocols that will need to be in place in order to return to in-person worship. We will be utilizing a combination of staff members and volunteers to serve on our Healthy Church Team.

Reopening Phases

This plan may be updated and/or modified as directives are adjusted, but as of today, Virginia Beach United Methodist Church's reopening plan will be implemented as follows:

Phase 1 - *CURRENT PHASE (JUNE 4, 2020)*

- We will continue our online worship experience on Sundays (8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 am).
- Children's sermons, videos, and activities will be available online.
- Small groups will continue to meet via Zoom.
- Youth will continue to meet via Zoom.
- Outreach will continue via our Potter's House ministry on a modified schedule.
- Financial assistance and ID/Birth Certificate assistance is available by phone.
- Food donations are still being accepted (contact [Mandi Cutchins](#) for instructions).
- Bike Ministry will continue repairs of bicycles and providing bicycles to those requiring transportation.

Phase 2

- We will continue our online worship experience on Sundays (8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 am).
- Children's sermons, videos, and activities will continue to be available online.
- Small groups will continue to meet via Zoom. Some small groups may be able to transition to in-person meetings.
- New small groups are forming.
- Youth will continue to meet via Zoom. Small groups may transition to in-person meetings as allowable at that time.
- Outreach will continue via our Potter's House ministry on a modified schedule.
- Financial assistance and ID/Birth Certificate assistance is available and may return to in-person appointments.
- Food donations are still being accepted (contact [Mandi Cutchins](#) for instructions).
- Bike Ministry will continue repairs of bicycles and providing bicycles to those requiring transportation.
- Volunteers will be recruited and trained to serve using enhanced safety and cleaning protocols.

Phase 3

Once the Bishop allows for a return to in-person worship, we will do so as safely and as quickly as we can reasonably do so. We recognize that many people in our vulnerable population may not be comfortable returning immediately. **We absolutely respect your individual right to choose what is best for you and are here to support you in your decisions.** While we expect that some things may look differently when we return, it is not yet known what recommendations and requirements will be in place at that time. Here is what we expect based on today's information:

- Return to in-person worship with new guidelines for safety, including but not limited to:
 - Singing may not be permitted initially.
 - Masks may or may not be required.
 - Children and Youth programming will return on-site.
 - Adult classes may resume.
 - Enhanced safety and cleaning protocols will be implemented.
- We will continue our online worship experience on Sundays (8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 am).
- Children's sermons and activities will be available both online and in-person (class sizes may be modified).

- Small groups will continue to meet via Zoom with some groups returning to on-site and off-site meetings.
- New small groups are forming both via Zoom and hosted off-site.
- Youth will continue to meet via Zoom and in person whenever possible.
- Outreach will return to in-person services at Potter's House.
- Financial assistance and ID/Birth Certificate assistance is available and may return to in-person appointments.
- Food donations will continue being accepted (contact [Mandi Cutchins](#) for instructions).
- Bike Ministry will continue repairs of bicycles and providing bicycles to those requiring transportation.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why can't we return to worship right now if the Governor is allowing churches to open?

Please understand that we do want to reopen. We all miss our church family and the opportunity to worship together; **however, safety is our top priority right now.** Our Bishop ultimately determines when we will reopen and she is only permitting a small number of churches to open as pioneer/test churches at this time.

Even if we were able to open now, current mandates would require us to operate on an advanced reservation system with 6-foot social distancing, mandatory masks, the implementation of new cleaning protocols, no singing, only 25 people, and no children under 12 in attendance. The configuration of our beautiful sanctuary would only allow us to host a very small number of people at a time, and would not allow us to offer **the warm, positive, family-friendly experience that we all want and deserve.** We have prayed constantly over you all and feel that this is the best way to serve our VBUMC family right now.

What are the dates for each phase?

Right now, we do not know. We are monitoring the situation day by day and are in frequent communication with our Bishop and our District Superintendent and will keep you updated as things change.

We all know what we can't do right now, what CAN we do?

We can continue to experience worship virtually and interact during worship live on our website, YouTube, and Facebook. Now is a great time to try out a Life Group or even start a new Life Group. Have you read a great book lately? Why not start a virtual book club?

The most important things we can do right now are to continue to BE the church. We can live by the example that Christ set for us by loving people as Jesus would. We can do this simply by checking on our neighbors, calling on our friends and family. Sending notes, emails and making phone calls are a great way to connect with people.

If you aren't sure who to call, or would like to make some new friends, please ask. We would love to help you connect in a meaningful way. This is a unique time for all of us to grow and live out what it means to BE the church. If you aren't able to invest in new studies or make new friends right now, simply make a commitment to praying for those suffering right now. We all know that prayer is one of our most powerful tools and it can be done anywhere.

What if I need something while the church is closed?

Please call us! We are all still working very hard for you and are available. You can reach any one of us at 757-428-7727.

Below is a listing of what areas each of us primarily serve; however, we are all happy to help in any way that we can! If you have an unmet need—church-related, or not—please reach out to us. We are called here for a time such as this and we can help. We want to help!

- [Mark Miller](#) Pastor/Pastoral Care
- [Chuck Cassidy](#) Hospitality Ministry/Pastoral Care
- [Mandi Cutchins](#) Missions Ministry
- [Amy Arrington](#) Business Operations
- [Jodi Fox](#) Children's Ministry
- [Pam Bentley](#) Youth Ministry
- [Pam Peskoe](#) Childcare and Adult Ministry

We Are Here for You!

Lastly, please know that we are praying fervently for you. **We miss you and we cannot wait until we can all worship alongside one another again.** While the circumstances over the past couple of months have been challenging, we are so proud of how everyone has come together to care for one another. Many groups have not only continued to meet remotely, but have grown and are thriving during this time. Our beautiful church building is a wonderful blessing for us all, but we have demonstrated that it is you, the people of this congregation, that are the church and that we are family. **We will get through this together.**

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