

A Proposal for the Resumption of Worship Services at Meriden United Methodist Church
Adopted by Meriden United Methodist Church Administrative Council on June 3, 2020

In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus tells us: "...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"(NIV) After much careful consideration and prayer, the following proposal is being offered to resume the fellowship of Sunday worship while also loving our neighbor by providing an environment to encourage social distancing and as much safety for protection from the novel corona virus as possible. We encourage all members to use their free will and God-given understanding to make the best decision for individual well-being and good health when determining when to return to Meriden United Methodist Church for worship. This proposal is also determinate on the guidance by Governor Kelly and the Jefferson County Health Department. Therefore, the dates are tentative.

Church services will resume on July 5. Two services are planned. The early service at 8:15 will be held in the gym. At 10:00, our traditional service will be held in the Sanctuary. No Sunday School classes will be held.

Here are more details for each service. The set-up has been guided by the recommendations from the CDC for religious gatherings.

First Service (8:15) in the gym: The chairs will be placed at least 6 feet apart. Families or couples who are sheltering together may place their chairs closer. We will have instrumental music or a vocal soloist only. There will be no congregational singing. There will be no paper bulletins, hymnals, or attendance pads. We will try to have a projection of scripture, prayer requests, joys, and concerns for people to view. A collection plate for offerings, as well as hand sanitizer and tissues will be available on a table at the entrance to the gym. Once the service concludes, congregants are asked to depart the gym without going into any other room of the church (except the restrooms as needed). The gym doors will be shut and no one may enter the gym for 3 days following the service.

A possible Prayer Service (9:00) in the basement common room: The chairs will be placed at least 6 feet apart. Families or couples who are sheltering together may place their chairs closer. There will be no congregational singing – only instrumental music or a vocal soloist. There will be no paper bulletins, hymnals, etc. A collection plate for offerings, as well as hand sanitizer and tissues will be available at the entrance to the basement common room. Once the service concludes, congregants are asked to depart the basement without entering any other room in the church (except the restrooms as needed). The basement will not be entered for 3 days following the service. This service will only be implemented if attendance at the planned two services is more than meets the CDC guidelines.

Second Service (10:00) in the Sanctuary: Congregants are encouraged to sit 6 feet apart. Congregants will be seated in every other pew (pews openings will be blocked by tape or ribbon). Families and couples who shelter together may sit closer. Please do not sit directly behind anyone. The overflow room will be open and utilized. No time of greeting will be held. No singing by the choir or the congregation will be held. Instrumental music and singing by a soloist will be part of the service. The liturgist will continue to read the scripture. There will be no books in the pews. Attendance will be taken by Susan but the pads will not be passed. The scripture lesson, and any announcements, joys, concerns, etc. will be projected on the screens. The collection plate, as well as hand sanitizer and tissues will be placed on the table at the entrance to the sanctuary. After the benediction, our Pastor will immediately go outside the church to encourage congregants to go outside as they are dismissed. Ushers will dismiss

one pew at a time to leave the sanctuary to maintain social distancing. The Sanctuary will be closed for 3 days following the service.

General notes for each service and for the church building as a whole:

1. In the gathering foyer of our church will be a welcoming sign as well as a sign to remind congregants to maintain social distancing and to continue the use of hand sanitizer and washing hands with soap and water. Greeters can still be present but no hand shaking can occur and social distancing will occur.

2. Hand sanitizer and tissues will be placed throughout the building. Clorox or Lysol wipes will be in each restroom for use if someone feels safer cleaning the toilet seats or sink faucets before or after use.

3. There will be no choir or congregant singing as singing is a significant spreader of COVID 19.

**4. Congregants are asked to be present only in the foyer, or the room where worship is attended. Please do not go into the kitchen. Coffee will not be served. Please do not go into the Sunday School rooms or the office. This directive is for ALL members of the congregation. As Sunday School is not being held, there is no reason to be in any of the Sunday School rooms. Please respect this request.

5. The nursery will not be open. Small children and babies are a wonderful gift and are welcome in our worship services.

6. Greeting time will not be held in any service.

7. Collection plates will be placed near the entrance to the sanctuary, gym, and basement common room. Collection plates will not be passed for offering collection.

8. The CDC states that religious gatherings are not expected to be places to screen for COVID 19. We will not be taking anyone's temperatures.

9. The CDC states that communion is approved as long as the elements are placed into the recipient's hands after the officiants use hand sanitizer. Communion will be offered on our customary days during our worship services.

**10. The use of face masks will be an individual decision but usage is highly recommended and encouraged. Both face masks and gloves will be provided in the foyer of the church.

**11. Data trends regarding Covid 19 infection rates will be monitored and those trends will impact guidelines regarding the wearing of face masks and gloves.

12. We will send out a query via mailed newsletter and email to request that everyone let the church office know which service they plan to attend. This will help us regulate numbers per service with the plan to be no more than 50 people per service.

13. We hope to live stream at least one service each Sunday. Pastor Gina Tyler will provide an FM broadcasting system that will broadcast the Sunday services. This FM signal reception is available within about one mile of the church. If congregants feel more comfortable sitting in a vehicle and listening to the service, this broadcast will be a valuable option.

14. Please help to remind everyone that it is an individual's responsibility to decide about attending church services. We will do everything possible to keep safety a top priority but no environment is guaranteed to be novel corona virus free.

15. Please help to remind everyone that the church building remains closed during the week. We do not want to put our beloved church staff's health at further risk by being in the church building. Church committee meetings may be held in the building and scheduled with Janette. Meetings will be held in the basement common room. If a second committee meeting must be held the same day, it may be scheduled in the gym. Meetings must be scheduled at least 3 days apart. Social distancing will be observed.

16. Further plans will be made following our new pastor's (Gina Tyler) arrival in July. These plans include but are not limited to the following: the resumption of Sunday School, Youth Group, exercise classes, community sports practices, Scout meetings, community use of any room in the church.