

# Huntsville First United Methodist Church

## COVID-19 Policy

**A. Policy.** It is the policy of Huntsville First United Methodist Church to take all reasonable steps and precautions to establish and maintain during the COVID-19 pandemic a healthy and safe environment for all members, staff, and other persons using the facilities of Huntsville First United Methodist Church. To effectuate that policy, the Church has established a COVID-19 Task Force (CTF) that will work in coordination with the Church Leadership Team, the Trustees, the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, clergy, lay staff, and membership to establish and implement the most effective policy, procedures, and rules to provide a safe environment within the facility and without.

**B. Guidance.** As in all aspects of our Christian life, the CTF pledges to pray for guidance in all decisions. The CTF will consider guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>], the Alabama Department of Public Health [<http://alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/>] and the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church [<https://www.umcna.org/>]. Additionally, the CTF will consider the assessments and recommendations of the Madison County Public Health Officer and Huntsville Hospital relating to local circumstances, conditions, and risks, and consider the advice of other health professionals.

**C. Minimum Standard.** The CTF will require the Church to maintain, at a minimum, compliance with all Orders applicable to it and currently in effect, as amended from time to time, of the State Health Officer of the Alabama Department of Public Health and all applicable local ordinances and regulations.

**D. Response to Changing Conditions.** Because the risks of COVID-19 are local and fluid, and may change within a very short period of time, as a matter of procedure, any member of the CTF may call a virtual meeting (by ZOOM or otherwise) upon reasonable notice to those entitled to vote to address any COVID-19-related issue, including changing these rules to amend or alter the protocols, rules, and procedures herein set out.

**E. Protocol for Determining Level of Risk.** The CTF shall from time to time consider guidance and information available to them and then declare a Level of Risk determined as of that time to be in effect until another Level of Risk is declared. It is hoped that the risk level will diminish over time, but if circumstances warrant because of an increase in risk, the Level may revert to a prior phase. The CTF shall, and does hereby, adopt the following risk phases:

1. **Level One/Restrictive.** The facilities are closed for public worship services or other activities except:

(a) **Staff Operations.** Clergy, lay staff, and any other persons on the premises, may and are expected to follow the directives, rules and procedures adopted by the Church's COVID-19 Task Force On July 30, 2020, "COVID-19 Plan for Huntsville First United Methodist Church Office: Do No Harm" effective August 3, 2020, as it may be amended.

(b) **Essential Functions.** Upon the approval and sponsorship of a member of the clergy, weddings, funerals, communion, baptisms and other rites of religious worship (not open to the general public) may be conducted and/or administered in the worship or other areas of the church so long as the **Basic Rules** are followed and enforced by the sponsoring clergy staff member.

(c) **Outdoor Activities.** Outdoor activities (gatherings not using the interior of the Church facilities as a gathering or meeting space) may be conducted in accordance with the "COVID-19 Plan for Huntsville

First United Methodist Church Outdoor Activities: Do No Harm” adopted by the CTF effective August 6, 2020, as it may be amended.

(d) **Suspension of Other Activities.** In-person worship or religious services, including small groups, are suspended during Level One.

2. **Level Two/ Moderately Restricted.** At such time as the CTF deems it appropriate, the CTF may declare attainment of Level Two. At Level Two, in addition to activities permitted in Level One, public worship services, gathering of smaller groups, volunteer and mission activities, and other group activities are permitted under the rules set out herein.

(a) **Customary Universal Rules.** Activities conducted under this Level Two shall be subject to the **Basic Rules**, the **Procedure and Standards for Entry**, and **Facility Rules** shall be in effect unless specifically modified as herein provided.

(b) **Reliance Upon Sound Discretion of Clergy.** Because the level of COVID-19 risk is subject to rise and fall, gatherings differ in their nature, and the number of participants and the space required to safely allow the participants to gather, all vary vastly with respect to activities within the Church facilities, the Church and the CTF shall place great reliance upon the sound discretion and judgment of the full-time clergy and do accordingly hereby invest in the full-time clergy the ability to schedule meetings, events, and functions and to determine with respect to each such meeting, event or function, the venue within the facility where the function will be held and the density or (maximum occupancy) allowed. CTF will be informed of these decisions.

(c) **Approval and Supervision.** All such gatherings must first be approved by a full-time pastor or designee and must be sponsored and attended by a member of the clergy or an approved lay staffer or volunteer approved by a pastor. Such sponsor shall supervise the gathering and shall be responsible for enforcement of the rules. Such gatherings may be scheduled to regularly reoccur.

(d) **Deviation from Rules.** Upon approval of the CTF after written application of the gathering sponsor, the CTF may modify, suspend, or deviate from the **Basic Rules**, the **Procedure and Standards for Entry**, and **Facility Rules** for a particular gathering for good cause shown.

3. **Level Three/ Mildly Restricted.** At such time as the CTF deems it appropriate, the CTF may declare attainment of Level Three. This level will permit gathering inside the facilities of no more than the maximum occupancy for business gatherings under guidelines issued by the Alabama Department of Public Health as are then in effect for the area of the meeting space in question. The CTF may amend or diminish Basic Rules requirements, but any remaining **Basic Rules** then in effect must be followed.

4. **Level Four/Open.** At such time as the CTF may determine, it may declare attainment of Level Four. This level will permit gatherings inside the facilities in accordance with traditional, pre-COVID-19 traditions of the Huntsville First United Methodist Church, subject to such permanent rules and restrictions that may be implemented at that time by Church authority.

**F. Basic Rules.** So long as COVID-19 remains a significant risk, these basic rules shall apply:

1. **Masks.** All persons within the facilities must wear a mask while inside except the mask can be removed when

- an individual staff member is in a private room

- a musician is helping lead worship
- a person is speaking to the congregation during worship
- a person is participating in communion

2. **Distancing.** Social distancing of 6 feet is to be maintained at all times between individuals not living in the same household.

3. **Hand Sanitation.** All persons shall sanitize their hands immediately before entering the facility at the sanitation stations set out at the point of entry, and thereafter, while remaining therein at appropriate times and designated places where sanitation supplies are made available.

4. **Exposure Risks.** No person who has COVID-19 or has been directly exposed to another person who has COVID-19 within 14 days prior, shall enter the facility until 14 days have elapsed since the diagnosis or exposure.

**G. Procedure and Standards for Entry.** So long as COVID-19 remains a significant risk, before any member or visitor is permitted access to the facility they must:

1. **Sign In.** Members and visitors shall sign in through either a QR code with their smartphone or with a paper document provided to them.

2. **Check Temperature.** Submit to a temperature check by a staff member or approved volunteer who uses an infrared or other “no touch” thermometer that shows an external body temperature of less than 100.4.

3. **Be Reminded.** If members or visitors experience COVID-19 symptoms or receive a COVID-19 diagnosis within 14 days after entry, they will be reminded to inform a member of the church staff of such circumstances.

**H. Facility Rules.** So long as COVID-19 remains a significant risk, the following rules shall apply to the Church’s buildings and facilities: The staff shall provide notice of these rules by appropriate signage.

1. **Entry and Exit.** During Level One, the Main Building may only be accessed through the Green Street entrance and the Wesley Center may only be accessed through the Green Street entrance. In other levels, ingress and egress will only be allowed at the entrances necessary and most accommodating to the gathering as determined by the sponsoring member of the staff. Such member of the staff shall also be responsible for insuring cleaning supplies and sign-in forms and other materials are posted at each place of entry, and shall be responsible to post a staff member or volunteer at the entry to guide entrants through the procedures. Where reasonable and possible, doors shall be propped open during arrival and departure times for gatherings.

2. **Hand Cleaning.** Entryway hand sanitizing stations shall be placed at all entrances that are or will be in use, including towelette hand wipes and gel/liquid sanitizing products, sign-in forms, trash cans, and furnishings suitable for handwriting the forms (with writing instruments and a method of sanitizing them between each use). Additional hand sanitizing stations shall be posted throughout the buildings at places deemed necessary to accommodate the gathering. Facility staff shall be responsible for maintaining adequate sanitizing supplies. Clerical staff shall be responsible for providing sign-in forms.

3. **Food and Drink.** No food or drink will be available.

4. **Rest Rooms and Water Fountains.** All rest rooms not reasonably necessary for staff use or use by gathering participants shall be blocked off by facility staff. Necessary and often used restrooms shall be open and available. A hand sanitizing station with sanitizing towelette sanitizing wipes and liquid/gel sanitizer shall be maintained outside the bathroom door, along with a trash can. Those using the restroom shall be requested to socially distance, wash their hands in accordance with the “20 seconds” rule, and use paper towels and/or sanitizing towelettes for touched surfaces. Facility staff shall clean all restrooms regularly. Water fountains will be closed off and blocked.

5. **Unused Areas.** Hallways and areas that are not currently available for gatherings shall be marked as closed and blocked off.

6. **Seating.** Pews in the sanctuary will be roped off and marked to indicate proper social distancing required for the gathering at the Level then in effect. Chairs shall likewise be arranged in the Wesley Worship Center to provide for proper social distancing. Similar arrangements shall be made for gatherings in the Fellowship Hall, classrooms, and other gathering spaces that are appropriate for the gathering.

7. **General Cleaning.** Facility staff shall generally maintain the facilities in a clean condition. All “high touch” areas should be wiped down daily with sanitizer, and more often considering the volume of traffic received at the location. Before and after any gathering, “high touch” areas should be sanitized, trash cans should be emptied, and the areas involved should be sanitized by an electronic sanitation mister. Staff shall schedule gatherings considering the time limitations facing facility staff to make before and after cleanings reasonably possible.

8. **Individual Work Areas and Items.** All staff and all “regular volunteers” are charged with the responsibility of maintaining their individual work space in a clean and sanitized manner. Any items, such as musical instruments, telephones, computers, microphones, switch or sound boards, program equipment or materials, and other such physical items primarily used by or in the control of particular staff members or volunteers should regularly be wiped down and maintained by that person in a sanitary way.

9. **Written Materials.** Distribution and use of written materials (such as hymnals, pew bibles, attendance cards, study materials, worship bulletins, etc.) and frequently touched or shared objects should be limited to the minimum necessary. Any disposable materials that are distributed at a service (such as weekly bulletins, song sheets, etc.) should be retained by the person using the item when leaving the facility.

10. **Collections.** Collection plates shall not be passed among the congregation. In lieu thereof, at services where an offering is to be collected, envelopes and a stationary collection plate shall be placed at the entrance, and attendees shall be encouraged to leave their offerings as they enter or leave the service. Any person carrying the collection plates or handling the offering envelopes will be encouraged to wear disposable gloves.

11. **Singing.** Traditional choir, ensembles, and congregational singing are permissible where proper social distancing can be maintained.

Approved by the COVID-19 Task Force:

Johnnie Hargrove, Chair, CLT

Bill Sullins, Lay Leader

Parke Keith, Finance

Robert La Branche, SPRC

Doni Harrison, Stewardship

Albert Swain, Trustees

Eliza Spearman, Family Ministries

Frank Crim, SPRC

Richard Webb, Lay Leader

Rev. Dr. Glenn Conner

Rev. Dr. Bill Crosby

Rev. Dr. Drew Holland

Rev. Brittany Camp

Rev. Dr. Henry Everitt

Rev. June Wilson

Rev. Sallie Colwick

Rev. Coy Hallmark

Date: August 27, 2020