

**First United Methodist Church
Red Oak, Texas**

PROTOCOLS FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON WORSHIP

The physical gathering of God's people feeds our souls and strengthens us for the journey of life and faith in a unique way. Gathering together as the body of Christ is an integral part of who we are as the church.

We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 cases in Ellis County on a weekly basis. Should cases increase in our area, we will reassess our intentions and options.

We will prayerfully do our part to adhere to John Wesley's first general rule of "do no harm" as we do our best to safeguard the public health of our members and guests.

The following plan was developed with guidance from Central Texas Conference and recommendations from the CDC and the Governor's office and with input from other Methodist churches' protocols.

- All decisions on when/how to return to in-person worship have been made jointly by the pastor and lay leadership of the Administrative Council.
- Those members or guests who were recently ill, over 65 years of age, or those with underlying health issues are encouraged to remain at home and watch the service online. Those who are ill should definitely stay home and watch the service online.
- Online worship will continue. It will be posted on the website by 6:00 PM on Sunday evening.
- The sanctuary, foyer and restrooms have been thoroughly sanitized.
- All people, ages 3+, must wear a mask to enter the building and during the worship service.
- All people, as they enter the church building, will have their temperature taken.
- Find ways to greet others without physically touching (no hugs or handshakes)
- Sanitizer stations are placed at each sanctuary entrance.
- Attendance will be recorded.
- **If an attendee tests positive for COVID-19, the person is required to notify the church office immediately after positive results are received and then quarantine himself/herself and family for 10 days (family, if living together, quarantine for 24 days).**
- No donuts, food or coffee will be served before or after the service.
- During the services, we will observe strict social distancing policies.
- Pews will be marked to show where you will sit so as to help with social distancing.

Protocols for Resuming In-Person Worship (*continued*)

- During the service, you should remain in your pew unless it is necessary to leave.
- Because viruses can survive on paper and hard surfaces, all hymnals, Bibles and papers will be removed from the pews. There will be no bulletins. All liturgy and hymns/songs will be projected on the screen.
- Offering plates will not be passed. There will offering plates/receptacles at the back doors of the sanctuary.
- Worship services will be condensed; masks should be worn throughout the service.
- Since the worship service will be condensed, the use of restrooms should be minimized.
- If you need to cough or sneeze during the service, you should cover your mouths with your elbows.
- Families will be dismissed by rows/family units from the back of the sanctuary at the end of the service.
- Once you have been dismissed following the service, please proceed to your vehicle.

Communion Sunday

- On communion Sundays, communion servers (gloved and wearing masks) will dispense pre-packaged communion elements in a plastic bag to each individual/family as they remain in their seats during the time of communion.

Children

- Children's Sunday School/nursery will be postponed until further notice.
- During Children's Time in worship, the children will remain in their pew with their family and not come forward to the front.
- Take home "Busy Bags" will be available for children at the entrance to the sanctuary. These bags are designed to be taken home at the end of the service.

Youth Fellowship

- The Youth Sunday School class will be postponed until further notice.
- Youth Fellowship will continue to meet on Sunday evenings.
- Youth Works! will begin meeting on Wednesday evenings at a date to be determined.

Adult Sunday School Classes

- Enrichment Class (continue meeting online through December)
- Sunshine Class (currently meeting in-person outside at the church or at the park)

Protocols for Resuming In-Person Worship (*continued*)

Prayer Group and Bible Study

- Prayer Group (continue meeting online through December)
- Bible Study (continue meeting online through December)

Choir

The choir as a whole will not meet for regularly scheduled rehearsals or sing in worship until a later time.

Other In-person Activities and Meetings

- In-person meetings and activities will be kept to a minimum.
- Committee meetings and other small groups are encouraged to hold meetings via Zoom until a later time. If committees or small groups do choose to meet in person, all safety protocols (masks and social distancing) must be observed.

Do you have questions about returning to in-person worship services?

**Please contact Jo Wilsford in the church office (972-617-9100/
firstumcredoak@gmail.com)**

As the Body of Christ, we are responsible to and for each other. We are all responsible for following the safety practices and for keeping the health of our members and guests as a top priority. “Church,” as we have known it, will be different, but we are still the CHURCH. We have grown stronger, held tighter, and found ways to seek joy in the midst of the awkward things this in-between time requires of us.

The mission of the First United Methodist Church of Red Oak has **not** changed. Our mission remains “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” We will continue to love our neighbors and love God as we practice good health and safety habits and begin gathering in person with mutual care and respect in this unprecedented time. Our faith remains grounded in the great love of Jesus Christ, who calls us to care for one another as we worship and fulfill our mission.