

August 28, 2021

TO: Congregations of Blooming Grove UMC, Janesville UMC, and Waterville Evangelical UMC

FROM: Prairie Lakes Parish Leadership Team -- Pastor Kathy, Council Chairs, and PPRC Members of each Church

RE: **August 17th COVID-19 Updates for Churches of the Prairie Lakes Parish (PLP)**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our PLP Leadership Team shares with you here updated COVID-19 news from the MN Conference of the United Methodist Church. Thank you for your continued patience as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 together!

MN Conference of the United Methodist Church (AKA “MN Conference”) Recommendation

In August, the MN Conference moved the dial back to Yellow in their COVID-19 Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches, due to substantial community transmission of the delta variant. Link here for Bishop David Bard’s 8/11/21 letter regarding reinstatement of the Yellow Phase guidelines - plus a full description of the Yellow Phase: <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/newsdetail/bishops-pastoral-letter-covid-precautions-amid-surge-in-cases-15355956> . Both documents will be included in our September newsletters.

On a high level, the MN Conference Yellow Phase includes the following:

- When a county surpasses a 5 percent COVID-19 positivity rate, United Methodist Churches in that county are asked to reinstate social distancing, indoor masking, and no indoor congregational singing.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CHURCHES IN OUR PRAIRIE LAKES PARISH?

With Waseca and Steele Counties consistently ranking far above the 5% COVID-19 positivity rate, and Rice and LeSueur Counties ranking above 5% as well, beginning Sunday, August 22nd, we will implement the MN Conference COVID-19 Yellow Phase Guidelines in the manner described below.

Outdoor Worship

When the weather allows, each of our three churches will hold their Sunday morning worship services outdoors - seated in lawn chairs - gathered around Pastor Kathy. Each church will provide music as best fits their location.

Indoor Worship

When weather conditions do not allow for outdoor worship, we will hold in-person worship indoors, following the social distancing and singing guidelines of the MN Conference. We will strongly recommend, but not require, that masks be worn. Please keep in mind, and hold in your hearts, our young people who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated.

Ongoing Updates

Our Prairie Lakes Parish Leadership team will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely and follow MN Conference guidelines, as well as local protocols, making adjustments as needed on a weekly basis. We will continue to follow the three simple rules as laid out by our MN Conference:

- We are a people that do no harm.
- We are a people that do all the good we can.
- We are a people that stay in love with God.