

Current Phase: Yellow



06.22.2020



COVID-19
Update

Prairie Lakes Parish COVID-19 Response Plan

Our Prairie Lakes Parish (PLP) Leadership Team, consisting of Pastor Kathy King, Council Chairs, and Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) members from all three churches, has been hard at work, monitoring and reviewing the ever-evolving COVID-19 updates/guidelines for faith communities from our MN Annual Conference of the UMC (Conference) - as they coordinate with the MN Department of Health (MN DOH) and the CDC. We also monitor COVID-19 updates from the UofM Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) and our insurance company (Church Mutual).

Throughout the months of May and June, we've watched as our Conference Office has worked tirelessly to create a "Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches" and to provide ongoing updates as new information is released by their resources. The Plan provides a guiding framework of recommendations to help church leaders make healthy and pastoral decisions for how/when their specific MN United Methodist churches can safely gather for worship, celebrations of life, small groups, faith formation, children/youth ministries, etc. (Read more about this Plan on the MN Conference website - <https://www.minnesotaucm.org/regatheringplan>.)

The recommendations provided by the Conference are driven by their Three Simple Rules:

- **We are a people that do no harm.** We practice physical distancing to minimize harm to others, especially the vulnerable.
- **We are a people that do all the good we can.** We care for the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors, providing food, emotional support, and supporting our health care system.
- **We are a people that stay in love with God.** When we love God through prayer praise, and worship, we grow in love of our neighbor. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable.

In conjunction with this Plan, each United Methodist church in MN has been asked to complete the following:

- 1) Prior to gathering together in any manner, create a COVID-19 Response Plan based on all of the resources mentioned above, with primary consideration given to the Conference "Phased Re-Gathering Plan".
- 2) File the Plan with their District Superintendent, communicate the Plan with their congregation, and post the Plan at church.

On June 11th, our PLP Leadership Team finalized our "Prairie Lakes Parish COVID-19 Response Plan" for the current phase - identified as "Yellow" by the Conference. (See Prairie Lakes Parish COVID-19 Response Plan included in this newsletter.) On the same day, we filed our plan with our District Superintendent, received his approval, and communicated the Plan with the PLP congregations via email. Notification is also being provided through individual mailings from Pastor Kathy for those without email, as well as the Facebook pages and/or newsletters of our churches. Please note that, as updates are released, we will move back and forth between Conference Plan phases as needed.

We encourage you to read this Plan for the Yellow Phase. We thank you, in advance, for working together with us to ensure the health and safety of everyone in our church and community. And in the words of the Conference: "We have come to understand, like never before, that the church is not a building. It is the expression of God's love made visible through the actions of devoted followers of Jesus."

Sincerely - BGUMC Members of the PLP Leadership Team:

Hjordi Churchill - Council Chair

Allison Janke, Judy Mahler, Cindy Saufferer - PPRC Members

And Pastor Kathy King

Prairie Lakes Parish COVID-19 Response Plan

Based on “Phased Re-Gathering Plan for Churches” MN Conference of United Methodist Church

Developed by Parish Leadership Team (06.11.20):
Council Chairs and PPRC members of all 3 churches



High-risk individuals (those over age 60 and/or with underlying health conditions) are highly encouraged to stay home, and will be given options to participate in the life of the church through virtual means.

Worship: online + drive-up or outdoor venues (includes weddings/funerals)

Per the recommendation of the MN Conference of the UMC:

- We will continue to offer online worship as our primary venue (weekly services pre-recorded from Prairie Lakes Parish sanctuaries), as it allows the greatest accessibility for all people
- When we add in-person worship, we will gather outdoors only - taking advantage of the reduced risk of COVID-19 transmission in outdoor settings

During drive-up worship:

- Each household should be in a separate car
- People will gather in the gathering space (i.e. parking lot) without leaving their vehicles
- Each vehicle to be at least six feet away from others
- There is no admittance to buildings or restrooms
- Playground equipment is unavailable

During outdoor worship:

- There will be no more than 50 percent of the church building's capacity meeting outside (MN Conference recommends keeping our numbers smaller than that out of an over-abundance of caution)
- Observe strict social distancing (six feet on every side of each family group) during entire gathering
- Attendees will wear face-masks
- Attendees will provide their own seating
- There is no admittance to the building or restrooms
- Playground equipment is unavailable
- No food will be shared between family groups

Indoor gatherings (includes weddings/funerals)

Per the recommendation of the MN Conference of the UMC:

- We will limit indoor gatherings to unique circumstances only - special approval required

During indoor gatherings:

- There will be no more than 50 percent of the church building's capacity meeting inside (MN Conference recommends not more than 25 percent out of an over-abundance of caution)
- Observe strict social distancing (six feet on every side of each family group) during entire gathering
- Attendees will wear face-masks
- No food will be shared/prepared within the building

Recording and live-streaming worship

As appropriate, we will record or live-stream our worship experiences whenever possible for greater participation.

MN Dept. of Health & MN Conference of UMC Protocols

We will adhere strictly to all MN Department of Health and MN Conference of UMC protocols regarding the following:

Drive-up/outdoor worship and indoor gatherings

- Record attendance for contact tracing purposes
- Use no-touch alternatives for greetings
- Collect offerings without person-to-person contact
- Suspend use of hymnals and Bibles
- Use screens, one-use bulletins, or online bulletins
- Ask children to remain with their family groups during “Children’s Moments”
- Celebrate Communion via virtual worship
- Modify Baptism celebrations to include no skin-to-skin contact with the pastor

Additional protocols for indoor gatherings

- Clean and sanitize the building between each event
- Provide personal sanitizing supplies for each event
- Direct the entrance, seating, and exit of all attendees
- Suspend congregational singing - music to be pre-recorded or provided by soloists
- Suspend fellowship time before and after the event

Small groups, faith formation, pastoral care, staff

- Small groups will continue to meet virtually or outdoors (following the outdoor worship guidelines)
- Pastoral care visits will be done by phone or online as much as possible
- We will not offer in-person children’s ministries, Vacation Bible School (VBS), mission trips, lock-ins
- Church staff (and volunteers) will continue to work from home as much as possible, but if in the building together, will maintain physical distancing, wear face-masks, and follow safety/sanitizing protocols

For more information, visit the following resources

[MN Conference of the United Methodist Church](#), [CDC](#), [Governor Walz Phased Plan](#), and the [MN Department of Health](#) guidelines regarding COVID-19.