

First United Methodist Church Natchitoches

Phase II Policies & Procedures

As the global Covid-19 pandemic continues, the viral spread remains alarmingly high in our nation, as well as in Louisiana. With the necessary extensions of Phase II of the re-opening plans statewide, leadership at FUMC Natchitoches is choosing to provide greater clarity and consistency in our efforts to minimize the threat of Coronavirus. Without our collective commitment to protect each other in our church environment, it would not be feasible to continue many of our current activities. Below are the guidelines and rationale for how we will attempt to maintain in-person worship and other gatherings. May we join together in the sacrifice of mutual care now and always.

A. PHASE II RESOURCES UTILIZED IN DECISION MAKING

We are committed to practicing ways of gathering that will “do no harm” and will “watch over one another with love.”

Our primary sources of guidance for reopening in each Phase come from The Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Louisiana Governor’s Office, Louisiana State Fire Marshal, CDC, and the U.S. President’s Office.

B. PHASE II WORSHIP

As per the State Fire Marshal’s orders for Phase II: “Places of Worship must adhere to strict mitigation standards to prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

Among many other practices and safeguards mandated in Phase II, churches are allowed to host 50% of available occupancy in addition to maintaining 6 ft between individuals or families during worship.

- For the Traditional Sanctuary, this is approximately 88 on the 1st floor, & 21 in the balcony. (This number includes worship leaders, ushers, greeters, and other volunteers and staff members.) Actual numbers might be lower based on social distancing needs.

- For Crossroads, this is approximately 68 in the worship center and 19 in the lobby. (This number includes worship leaders, ushers, greeters, and other volunteers and staff members.) Actual numbers might be lower based on social distancing needs.

- For Bostick Hall, this is approximately 49. Bostick Hall will be used for overflow seating. Actual numbers might be lower based on social distancing needs.

The following guidelines are expected to be fully met by all who attend worship. If persons are unable or unwilling to comply, we ask that they refrain from attending worship until that time when guidelines may be less restrictive.

- If you have had a fever or any other symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in the past 14 days, such as a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell you should not attend.

- If you or anyone in your household has been diagnosed with or has had symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in the past 14 days or if you or anyone in your household has come into contact with anyone who may have COVID-19 you should not attend.
- The CDC Guidelines also recommend that those with underlying health concerns and those 65+ years old should avoid group gatherings and worship from home. We trust that each family will make its own faithful decision considering your individual situation.
- If you are unsure about your situation, see www.cdc.gov/coronavirus for information to help you decide whether you should attend.
- Maintain physical distance of 6 ft between individuals/family units. The worship spaces have been prepared to assist attendees in maintaining the appropriate distances.
- Wear a face covering/mask at all times for everyone ages 8 and older. Worshippers should bring their own face coverings/masks; however, disposable masks will be available. Exceptions to this are as follows: anyone who has a medical condition that prevents the wearing of a face covering, anyone who is consuming a drink or food, anyone who is trying to communicate with a person who is hearing impaired, anyone who is giving a speech for broadcast or to an audience, or anyone temporarily removing his or her face covering for identification purposes (source gov.louisiana.gov).
- Use hand sanitizer upon entrance and after touching anything in the space. To maintain optimum sanitation, entryways and access to other areas of the facilities will be limited.
- Your name will be recorded by a volunteer and a picture taken of the room when all are seated so that, in case of an outbreak, we will have record of who attended and by whom you were seated.
- All staff and worship volunteers will have their temperature taken by touchless thermometers prior to worship.
- Restrooms occupancy will be limited to one person at a time, with the exception of small children or other persons needing physical assistance.
- Offering baskets will be in front of the Sanctuaries for tithes and offerings.
- No nursery or childcare (Children are welcome to attend with their family).
- No food or drinks will be served to avoid clusters of people gathering.
- No communion during Phase II.

C. PHASE II GROUPS GATHERING INDOORS ON CAMPUS

Sunday School - FUMC Natchitoches will not be holding Sunday School in the building on Sunday mornings.

Church Groups - FUMC Natchitoches small groups of 10 or less may return to gathering indoors when guidelines can be fully met by participants. Please make a reservation with the church office at least 7 days prior. All of the guidelines from worship will apply. Please take attendance and a picture of where everyone is seated to turn into the office.

Rentals - FUMC Natchitoches will not be renting out any space during Phase II.

Weddings/Funerals - FUMC Natchitoches will allow weddings and funerals during Phase II. All guidelines from worship will apply except the maximum occupancy. Occupancy is currently 50 people total under the governor's mandate. This number may change based on the governor's office and FUMC Natchitoches will go by the current mandate on occupancy at time of wedding or funeral. A guest list will need to be turned into the office.

D. PHASE II OFFICE ACCESS

The Church Office staff will be working at the office but will be adjusting to working under new conditions. The Church Office will be open from 8:30am-1:30pm Monday-Thursday. Clergy will continue to be available and accessible throughout the week.

- It is preferred that visitors make an appointment to meet with staff members.
- All visitors must remain at least 6 ft from staff persons and others.
- All visitors must wear a face covering/mask when meeting with staff members and others.
- Staff members will adhere to proper social-distancing and sanitation guidelines while working.

D. PHASE II REPORTING POSITIVE CASES OR POSSIBLE EXPOSURE

FUMC Natchitoches asks that if you attend a service or any function at the church and test positive within 14 days of attending that you please notify the church. You can do so by going to www.fumcnla.org/covid19 and clicking "REPORT NOW". There will be a short form to fill out that will notify the pastors. Your identity will remain confidential, unless otherwise requested, but we want to do our due diligence and notify those with whom you may have come into contact, so they can quarantine or be tested.

E. PHASE II CHANGES

FUMC Natchitoches will continuously monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and the new guidelines and mandates put out by The Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Louisiana Governor's Office, Louisiana State Fire Marshal, CDC, and the U.S. President's Office. As we monitor, some policies and guidelines may change based on new guidelines and mandates. Everyone will be notified as changes have to be made to try and keep everyone safe during this time.

PHASE III

FUMC Natchitoches will await Gov. John Bell Edwards' announcement regarding Phase II progress before implementing any plans for Phase III. Upon reviewing that data, we will be informed of new guidelines set for churches by our government officials and The United Methodist Church.

The latest information and updates can be found at www.fumcnla.org/covid19.