



ST. JAMES
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

RE-LAUNCH PLANS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

As of August 13, 2020
St. James United Methodist Church
321 Pleasant Valley Dr
Little Rock AR
501.217.6700 www.stjameslr.org

Introduction

On March 12, 2020 St. James United Methodist Church took the precaution of canceling all services, programs, meetings, and groups on-campus. What we hoped would be a few short weeks has now lasted more than five months. The Coronavirus continues to impact the entire world and the spread is not slowing down.

As we live into this new normal, the church leadership has discussed, prayed, and struggled with how to fulfill our mission of *To Know Jesus Christ and to Make Him Known* and to continue to live out our core values.

During this time, our worship services have gone to exclusively online through Live Streaming, Facebook Live, and rebroadcast of services. Our worship attendance has actually increased! Our summer attendance remains above 1,000 per weekend where usually our summer average is below 700 --- What a blessing! -- This demonstrates that the church is the people and we can worship anywhere at any time. That is not to say that we do not miss being together in our sacred spaces. Nothing can replace the spiritual fulfillment of worshipping together with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In March, the Church Council formed a Relaunch Task Force. Members of this task force are: Brad Sweeney, chair of Church Council; Kevin Keith, chair of Finance; Lee Sing, chair of Staff Parish; Julie Luther-Kelso, chair of Board of Trustees; Don Bacon, Chancellor; Bill Waddell, Lay Leader; Dr. Scott Stern, Medical Professional; Kim Anderson, Executive Director of Ministries; Gayle Bohannon, Church Administrator; Rev. Greg Schick, Rev. Claire Caldwell and Rev. Carness Vaughan.

This taskforce has surveyed the congregation on two different occasions, had private conversations with many church members, closely monitored the guidance from Bishop Mueller and the Governor, prayed together, and struggled with how to best be the church known as St. James. The work has not been easy. The work is not complete and will not be complete for some time. Through their efforts, this document has been prepared. Due to the changing circumstances of our day-to-day lives, the guidelines are designed to be adaptable and responsive to those changes.

As you read this plan, please keep in mind our mission is *To Know Jesus Christ and to Make Him Known*. Our first core value is to *Start with love and grace*. We are striving to fulfill our mission, extend love and grace, and be a part of solving problems – not adding to the problems of our community.

The Relaunch Plan was approved by the task force on August 5, 2020
Approved by the Board of Trustees on August 13, 2020
Approved by the Church Council on August 13, 2020
Reviewed by the District Superintendent on August 6, 2020

Disclaimer on changes/updates

Due to the nature of the Coronavirus and the current rising rate of cases, this plan will be revised as necessary. This may include:

- Suspending in-person worship
- Suspending all on-campus meetings or programs
- Suspending office hours or requiring remote work for appropriate staff.

What would cause these actions to take place? It is impossible to predict how long this pandemic will last, if the virus will change, or if infection rates will continue to rise. Our goal is to provide a safe, healthy environment for all using reasonable measures and with the best interests of the church as a whole in mind. If it is felt that we cannot provide a safe environment changes will be mandated. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Staff Member in a position that requires personal contact with members who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past fourteen (14) days.
- Participant in worship or on-campus activity tests positive for COVID-19
- Positive cases of COVID-19 in Pulaski County that are greater than 10% of total tests for seven straight days
- Directives from the Governor
- Directives from Bishop Mueller/Arkansas Annual Conference
- Inability to procure proper cleaning/sanitizing products
- Observation of unforeseen issues that endanger those attending worship or on-campus activities
- Disregard of protective measures required by the relaunch plan

General Expectations for all Ministries

St. James United Methodist Church will follow the guidance provided by the Arkansas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, various departments of the State of Arkansas government, and the CDC. As a part of the United Methodist Connection, we will give priority to the directives of the bishop of the Arkansas Annual Conference. With this in mind, the following actions are required for all ministries, volunteers, employees and guests at St. James.

1. Face coverings must be worn upon entering the building and while in common areas of the church (hallways, Sanctuary, Worship Center, Mission Café, and rest rooms).
2. Upon entering any part of the campus, all persons must sign-in, have their temperature taken by an authorized person, answer general health questions, and questions regarding any possible COVID exposure.
3. If someone is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, has known exposure to COVID within the last 14 days, or tested positive for COVID within the past 14 days, that person shall not enter any campus building and shall not interact with any person on the church campus. If there is a pastoral need please contact the church at 217-6700 so that the church can care for you.
4. Individuals who are in the high risk categories as defined by the CDC are strongly encouraged to limit their exposure and stay home. For information on high-risk categories, please access the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>. St. James will continue to offer worship services and other programs via electronic means.
5. Groups meeting in-person, whether at the church or off-site as an acknowledged group of St. James, should observe face coverings and social distancing guidelines at all times.
6. There shall be no unscheduled meetings or groups at this time. Any ministry, group, or individuals wishing to meet in-person at St. James must schedule their meeting through the Executive Administrative Assistant (217-6711 or teresa@stjameslr.org). This is to ensure that rooms are set up with proper social distancing, sanitization/cleaning is done properly and timely, and to facilitate contact tracing in the event a person in the group tests positive for COVID-19.
7. All groups meeting either on campus or off campus shall record the names, address, and telephone numbers of the person participating in the group activity in order to facilitate contact tracing in the event that it is necessary.
8. Any events involving children, youth or protected persons must follow the Safe Sanctuary Policy of St. James.

Worship Services

As of June 28, 2020, the Arkansas Annual Conference is allowing groups of 50 or less to meet for services as long as the length of the service does not exceed 35 minutes. This includes worship, funerals, and weddings. That limit has not changed as of the publication of this relaunch plan. If the Arkansas Annual Conference modifies the 50-person limit, this relaunch plan will automatically be amended to reflect the new limit.

Our primary worship services will be online at 9:30 AM and 10:55 AM. Worship services are available on the St. James website and Facebook pages. In-person worship is tentatively scheduled to resume on September 20, 2020. The worship schedule will be as follows:

Sunday Morning Sanctuary

In-Person Traditional Worship, 9:00-9:35 AM

Cleaning of space, 9:45-10:30 AM

Livestream Traditional Worship (only necessary staff in attendance),

10:55-11:55 AM

Sunday Morning Worship Center

Livestream Contemporary Service (only necessary staff in attendance)

9:30-10:30 AM

Cleaning of space, 10:30-11:15 AM

In-person Contemporary Worship, 11:30 AM-12:05 PM

Wednesday Night service(s) as need arises.

In order to maintain safety protocols, the following procedures will be enforced.

1. All worship services will be limited to 50 people. This includes all worship leaders/staff.
2. Individuals/families will be required to make a reservation to attend in-person worship.
3. As worshipers enter the campus, you will be directed to where to park.
4. Participants will be directed as to which entrance to use for a particular service.
5. A greeter will check you in, take your temperature, and ask you questions provided by the CDC.
6. You will be required to wear a face covering at all times when in the church.
7. So that we can easily greet one another, please wear your church name tag. If you do not have a name tag, there is a place on the registration form to request a name tag.
8. We ask that you proceed directly to the worship space and do not go into other parts of the building. Ushers will seat you so that social distancing can be observed.
9. There will be no nursery or children programs provided at this time, per the Arkansas Annual Conference directives. Children are welcome to worship with their family. Pre-packaged, take home activity bags will be made available.
10. Please exit through the doors at the rear of the worship space. Ushers will guide you. Once out of the worship space, please exit the building using the same entrance you entered.
11. For safety reasons, there will be no refreshments, snacks or water fountains allowed.
12. We ask that only one person or family group at a time be in the restrooms.

Communion

When communion is offered in worship, pre-packaged juice and wafers will be provided. Ushers will provide guidance on when to proceed forward to receive communion. Social distancing must be observed. The kneeling rail will remain closed until further notice.

Bulletins, Hymnals, Pew Bibles

Following the guidelines of the Arkansas Annual Conference and to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we will not be providing bulletins, hymnals, pew Bibles, or paper items. If you would like to access the order of worship, as you enter the church, you will be invited to scan a QR code which will download the bulletin to your smart device (phone, iPad, tablet, etc.). You may also download the bulletin through the link on the church's website or Facebook page.

Offering

Offering plates will not be passed during the worship services. There will be a collection box to receive your gifts at the end of the service, near the exit doors. We encourage all to continue to support the mission and ministry of St. James through regular, faithful giving. Gifts can be mailed to the church, given on-line, electronic funds transfer, and text-to-give (501.222.4613).

Congregational Singing/Passing of the Peace

Following the guidelines of the Arkansas Annual Conference, congregational singing will be allowed only if social distancing is observed and everyone singing is wearing a face covering¹. Additionally, there will be no passing of the peace. We strongly urge everyone to maintain social distance. Handshakes, fist bumps, hugs, or touching of anyone outside of your immediate family are prohibited.

Nursery

Per the Arkansas Annual Conference directives, there will be no nursery or child care provided for any worship service. Children are welcome to attend worship with their families. Pre-packaged, take home activity bags will be made available.

Weddings/Funerals

Weddings and funerals will be limited to 50 people or less. All of the standard procedures listed above for Sunday worship are to be followed (exception being reservations). These must be scheduled with a pastor in coordination with the Executive Administrative Assistant (217.6711, teresa@stjameslr.org)

¹ This plan was approved on August 13. On August 14 the Arkansas Annual Conference released a statement allowing congregational singing if social distancing is observed and face coverings are worn by all singers.

Baptisms

Baptisms should be scheduled with a pastor in advance. They may be conducted during an in-person worship service. They may also be recorded in advance and included in the live-stream service. Contact the Executive Assistant for information and scheduling.

Volunteers/Staff

Ushers will be required to attend a training session on the new procedures. They will be asked to wear a face covering at all times. In addition gloves will be provided if they so desire. There will be no handshakes, hugs, or personal touches.

MINISTRY AREAS

This section of the Relaunch Plan goes into effect immediately upon approval of the Board of Trustees and the Church Council.

Adult Small Groups and Sunday School Classes

Sunday School classes are encouraged to continue to meet via video conference at this time. If a group does wish to meet in-person, a request must be submitted to Rev. Claire Caldwell. St. James will assign appropriate rooms, entrances, and meeting time so that social distancing guidelines can be followed. We do ask that groups take attendance either through the Shelby Next App or by emailing an attendance list to claire@stjameslr.org.

Bible Studies, Prayer Groups, UMW, and other small groups may meet in-person at the church provided group is less than 50 people and appropriate space is available. Groups must contact either the Executive Assistance or Rev. Caldwell to arrange room, time, and review the general expectations. Note: Due to social distancing guidelines, you will be assigned a room to meet in that fits the size of your group. It may or may not be the room you were in prior to COVID-19.

Wednesday Night Dinners will not be offered this fall.

Care Ministries

Support Groups, classes, and non-related groups (AA, NA, Al-Anon) may also meet in-person as long as the general requirements above are followed. Groups must request to meet in-person and schedule through the Executive Administrative Assistant. Attendance shall be taken and the addresses and telephone numbers of those in attendance shall be recorded and maintained by the person(s) in charge of the meeting and maintained in the event contact tracing is necessary. Groups shall be required to sign an Outside Group Form in which the person(s) in charge of the group agree that all persons attending the meeting shall comply with the church's relaunch requirements.

Child Enrichment Ministries

The Learning Center and Kids LIFE programs have been in operation since June 1. They will continue their programming following the guidelines of Arkansas Department of Human Services and Department of Health Guidelines. The Administrative Committee of both programs has adjusted their parent handbooks/guidelines to provide requirements for staff, children, and families participating in the programs.

Children's Programming

Sunday School

The Arkansas Conference has directed that Children's Sunday School will not meet at this time. Sean Dunbar, Director of Children's Ministry provides an on-line Sunday School lesson each week for families that is age appropriate. Families are encouraged to use the materials together as a family.

Mid-week programming

Tween Time (3rd-5th grade) mid-week ministry may resume when the relaunch plan is approved so long as all of the general expectations for ministry are followed. This includes, but is not limited to: total number of participants is 50 or less; sign-in, temperature checks, any snacks are individually packaged, social distancing will be observed, face coverings are worn by all participants, and event does not last more than 35 minutes.

Nursery and childcare

There will be no nursery or childcare provided for any on-campus program until further notice.

Youth Ministry

St. James Youth ministry must follow not only the protocols set forth in this document but the guidelines established by the Arkansas Annual Conference as well.

Sunday School

Youth Sunday School should continue to be on-line for the foreseeable future. Safe Sanctuary policy for on-line meetings must be followed.

Sunday Night and Mid-Week Programming

Plans for in-person gatherings need to be made very carefully, discussed, and approved by the Executive Director of Ministries. All of the general expectations must be followed including, but not limited to; limit of 50 total people, any food must be pre-packaged and individual portions; no group singing; face coverings must be worn; and social distancing observed at all times.

Off Campus Events

These must also be planned carefully to ensure safety protocols are maintained. Transportation to and from events must meet the Arkansas Annual Conference guidelines. The Executive Director of Ministries must be notified of any off campus events and the event scheduled on the church calendar.

Missions

The work of the church outside of the walls has been critical during this time and has not been stopped by the pandemic. We appreciate the leaders of various mission projects following the general expectations. Any mission project that wishes to meet on campus, must first contact Brenda Weeks, Director of Missions. Requirements for participation in mission activities shall be consistent with the requirements of this relaunch plan, including the recording of those persons participating and their addresses and telephone numbers in the event that contact tracing is necessary.

Music Ministry

Large vocal choirs for adults, youth, or groups will not meet at this time. Small ensembles may sing together so long as social distancing and proper procedures as provided by the Arkansas Annual Conference are followed. The Director of Music, Worship and the Arts will approve any ensemble groups. Practices times will be placed on the church calendar and maintenance notified.

Children's choirs will not be offered this fall.

Handbell choirs for youth and adults may be formed this fall. Practice may not exceed 35 minutes and face coverings must be worn at all times. It is also suggested that instead of cloth gloves that plastic/latex gloves be worn. Handbells must be sanitized after each practice/use. Social distancing will be observed as stated by the Arkansas Annual Conference.

Instrumentalists may be a part of a worship service provided social distancing and safety precautions are taken. It is the responsibility of the Director of Music, Worship, and the Arts to ensure that the most current protocols from the Arkansas Conference and music experts are followed.

Praise Bands (youth and adults) must observe social distancing of 12 feet. Face coverings must be worn except when speaking or singing.

Outside Groups and Special Events

In general, and with the exception of Care Ministries noted above, outside groups are not allowed to use our facility at this time. Requests may be received by the Executive Administrative Assistant. Any exception to this policy will be determined by the Executive Staff Team on a case by case basis.

Recreation Ministries

At this time all sports that involve close contact (basketball, volleyball, soccer, etc.) are not allowed. If participants in a sporting or recreational activity can follow the social distancing guidelines and participants wear face coverings, then they may request to meet. Each request will be reviewed by a member of the Executive Staff Team for approval. Requirements for participation in sporting or recreational activities shall be consistent with the requirements of this relaunch plan, including the recording of those persons participating and their addresses and telephone numbers in the event that contact tracing is necessary.

Senior Adult Ministry

Due to our seniors being in the vulnerable category, we recommend that ministries by senior adults be conducted via video conference or other online platform. If a group wishes to meet in-person, please contact Jenny Smith and she will coordinate the event with the Executive Assistant as appropriate and with requirements for participation that are consistent with the church's relaunch plan.

In the Event of Exposure

Anyone who has been on-campus or involved in a church activity off campus and either tests positive or has close contact with someone who tests positive within the past 14 days, shall notify the church immediately. The report should be made to either Kim Anderson, Executive Director of Ministries or Gayle Bohannon, Church Administrator.

Notification to the church body of exposure by a person participating in a church activity will be made by either Gayle or Kim as appropriate. The place/time/nature of exposure will depend on the extent of notification. Each exposure event will be handled on a case-by-case basis. For example: If one youth reported a second hand exposure to COVID-19, we would follow the Arkansas Health Department guidelines for notification. If someone tested positive and attended a worship service, everyone in that service would be notified. Except as required for determining contact with a person who tested positive or to effectively facilitate or conduct contact tracing, the privacy of persons who have tested positive shall be maintained.