

NICHOLS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Guidelines for In-Person Worship - Beginning September 13, 2020

Purpose: These reopening guidelines are designed for the safety of those attending worship, our staff, our ministry team, and our community. As we have seen and heard from the medical experts and our leaders, in-person gatherings inside a building presents increased health risk to all. We must remember that being a part of a community requires working together. Our guidelines are based on our UMC NY Conference approved re-opening process which is based on health experts' recommendations as well as guidelines in the State of CT for religious organizations during COVID.

Who Should Attend: Our worship service will continue to be broadcast via Zoom for the indefinite future. Per CT state guidelines, our sanctuary is limited to 25% capacity which is approximately 50 people (including the worship team). We recognize that everyone wants to be in the sanctuary and see faces in person. We all want that! However, the reality is that our space is limited and there are some who just can't worship via Zoom either logistically or spiritually. Attending worship in person should be treated like a scarce commodity and should be reserved for those who can only worship in person. In addition, those over 65 or with compromised health are strongly encouraged not to attend. Based on the feedback from our congregational survey, 70% plan to worship online via Zoom. That should allow those who need to worship in-person to do so.

Guidelines & Expectations for Worship

- There will be only one worship service on Sundays at 10am (in-person and on Zoom). We're limited to only one service due to the imposed cleaning requirement that would have to occur between usage of the sanctuary.
- Reservations MUST be made by noon on Thursdays by emailing (nicholsmethodist@snet.net) or calling (203.375.5817) the church office with the names of each person expected to attend. To be sure we remain under our maximum attendees, only those who receive confirmation should expect to attend.
- You will be asked to follow the instructions of the worship team and worship guides as they help ensure safety for all involved while attending worship. Please note that we have cleaned the building and wiped down the high-touch surfaces in the sanctuary to avoid the spread of germs.
- All entry to the building must be through the MDO doors in the semi-circle; exits will be made through the main sanctuary doors. A hand-sanitization station will be just inside the doorway.
- Masks are required at all times you are in the building. The worship team will also be wearing them. If you do not have one, a disposable mask will be provided at the front door.
- Temperature checks will be taken as you enter the building. Please be sure that you stay home if you feel sick or have COVID or have been exposed to the virus.
- People who reside in the same household will need to sit together and stay at least 6 feet from anyone who does not live with you. Children and youth must stay with their families.
- As we have arranged a seating chart to maximize the seating capacity in the sanctuary, you will be escorted to your seat. We understand that it might not be where you normally sit and appreciate your understanding.
- Please refrain from hugging, shaking hands, or other contact and feel free to waive as you greet those you are worshipping with. Also, please exit the church promptly as you're instructed by the ushers and do not linger in the parking lot.
- Please be advised to help with ventilation the new sanctuary air conditioning system and windows will be open throughout the worship service. Please plan to dress accordingly.

- All the information needed to worship will be provided on the worship screen including the pre-recorded hymns and special music. Singing and responsive reading is not permitted in the building during worship.
- As we will not pass an offering plate during the worship service, please feel free to contribute online through our website giving page or drop your offering in the offering plate at the front of the sanctuary as you are seated.
- Since cleaning of all spaces used on Sundays is required, we ask for all to remain in the sanctuary space. There is a bathroom at the rear of the sanctuary if needed.
- While Pastor David will continue to have the Kid's Message, children who attend with their families will be requested to remain with them for the message.
- We do not expect to have children in the nursery as children under 2 years of age cannot wear masks and masks are required for entry into the building.
- Until at least October 1st, there will be no in-person Church School. Tessa Speaks will provide an alternative online experience to keep your kids connected and help their faith continue to grow.
- Should we become aware that someone who has attended our worship service is infected with the virus, we will notify those in attendance via email or phone call.
- As these guidelines are designed for the safety of all involved, we are thankful for your cooperation that will allow in-person worship to continue. Should compliance for social distancing, mask-wearing, and other guidelines become a problem, Pastor David will end the worship service and dismiss the gathered congregation.
- These guidelines will remain in place until such time as has been determined they can be modified.