

Westlake United Methodist Church
COVID-19 Reopening Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Westlake United Methodist Church (WUMC) has temporarily ceased holding in-person Sunday worship services, small group meetings, administrative meetings, and other gatherings on the church campus.

This policy provides the framework by which WUMC, in an effort to balance public health concerns and the physical wellbeing of our community with the desire to also nurture and care for the spiritual wellbeing of our members and guests, will begin offering in-person programming and services on the WUMC campus.

This policy was developed with John Wesley's first of three general rules, 'Do No Harm,' as our guiding principle.

2. DEFINITIONS

The below terms shall be defined as follows when used in this document:

High Risk Individuals: High Risk Individuals include 1) individuals 65 and older and 2) individuals with serious underlying health conditions including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those with compromised immune systems.

3. SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

This policy shall provide minimum standards for re-opening the WUMC campus to WUMC groups during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Westlake United Methodist Preschool (WUMP) is subject to state and local government regulations and dictates regarding the re-opening of child care centers that may, in certain cases, supersede this document.

4. STAGE-GATE CRITERIA

Re-opening the WUMC campus to allow in-person gathering will occur in stages that coincide with the stages of the [AustinTexas.gov/COVID-19 Risk-Based](https://www.austintexas.gov/COVID-19)

Guidelines. In order to move from one stage to the next, the following stage-gate criteria must be met.

The Church Leadership & Senior Pastor will make the decision to proceed to the next stage if WUMC is able to obtain the resources and supplies necessary to adhere to this policy (i.e. disinfectant, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, masks, thermometers, etc.).

If stage criteria are not met then the Church Leadership & Senior Pastor shall have the authority to regress to the previous stage.

5. STAGES OF REOPENING

WUMC shall resume on-campus activities in stages as described in Table 1. The measures detailed in Table 1 are minimum standards. More rigorous standards may be required in specific instances in order to mitigate risk to an acceptable level.

Transition to a lower numbered stage that allows for more in-person gatherings will proceed at a minimum of a 4-week delay. For example, when Travis County moves from a Stage 4 to a Stage 3, WUMC's practices will shift no sooner than 4 weeks later. This is to attempt to prevent a rapid succession of opening and closing and to allow preparation time to make changes as safely as possible.

Transition to a higher numbered stage that is more restrictive of in-person gatherings will occur immediately upon guidance from Travis County that conditions warrant increased caution.

The WUMC campus shall remain closed to outside groups unless the Church Leadership and Senior Pastor approve their presence as has been done for Women's Storybook Project.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

WUMC staff, in consultation with the Church Leadership, shall develop the necessary procedures for the implementation of the minimum safety standards outlined in Table 1.

The Church Leadership & Senior Pastor shall be responsible for reviewing and approving those procedures to ensure alignment and continuity across all WUMC departments.

The Church Leadership & Senior Pastor shall have the authority to determine when, based on the best available data and guidance issued by relevant experts, public health conditions have improved to the level where the protective measures implemented by this policy are no longer needed. At such time, the Church Leadership & Senior Pastor shall notify church members that such a decision has been made and this policy shall become obsolete.

7. APPROVAL

This policy has been approved and adopted for the immediate use by a majority vote of the WUMC Church Council held on September 24, 2020.

<u>*Signed Original on File</u>	<u>9/25/2020</u>
Signature	Date

<u>James R. Burke</u>
Name

WUMC Church Council Chair

Table 1

Travis County Stages	Green Stage 1 Gathering size TBD Wear Facial Coverings, Physical Distancing	Blue Stage 2 Groups of <25 Wear Facial Coverings, Physical Distancing	Yellow Stage 3 Groups of <10 Wear Facial Coverings, Physical Distancing	Orange Stage 4 Groups of <10 Wear Facial Coverings, Physical Distancing	Red Stage 5 Stay Home, Stay Healthy
AustinTexas.gov 7 Day Average Hospital Admits	0	< 10	10-39	40 - (70-123)* (depending on rate of increase)	>70-123 (depending on rate of increase)
AustinTexas.gov Recommendation for High Risk Populations	Avoid gatherings greater than 25	Avoid gatherings greater than 10	Avoid gatherings social and greater than 10	Avoid gatherings social and greater than 2	Avoid gatherings outside of household
Worship	Sunday services in person. New safety protocols in place.	Pre-recorded from WUMC facilities/home or Live produced livestreamed worship from WUMC facilities or Phase in indoor, in-person worship with a reservation system that limits gathering numbers and allows for social distancing. All safety protocols in place.	Pre-recorded from WUMC facilities or home or try out parking lot/outdoor, drive-in-style Communion and/or worship. Participants remain in vehicles or wear face coverings and physically distance in family groups.	Pre-recorded from WUMC facilities or home.	Pre-recorded from home, virtual music
Vocal and Choral Music	Solo & ensemble during worship	Pre-recorded from WUMC facilities/home or Live produced livestreamed	Pre-recorded from WUMC facilities/home	Pre-recorded from WUMC facilities/home	Pre-recorded from home

		with no more than 3 vocalists singing physically distanced.			
Office	Open. Staff to resume in-person work with exceptions. Staff mtgs. in-person with virtual option.	Available for scheduled appointments only. Staff allowed to work from office or home. Staff meetings virtual	Closed. Available for scheduled appointments only. Staff allowed to work from office or home. Staff mtgs. virtual	Closed. Non-Essential Staff allowed to work alone in the office but NOT required. Staff mtgs. virtual	Closed. Non-essential staff work from home.
Adult/Youth/Children Ministries	Gatherings allowed, both virtual & physical, with size and location to be determined.	Gatherings allowed, both virtual & physical (indoor and outdoor), with size and location to be determined, and common areas shall remain closed.	Virtual gatherings or small outdoor gatherings of <10 with precautions in place	Virtual gatherings only	Virtual gatherings only
Service Ministries	WUMC facilities use allowed, as determined by leadership.	Some WUMC facilities use allowed, as determined by leadership, Common areas shall remain closed	Distributions/Collections in parking lot. Building closed.	Distributions/Collections in parking lot. Building closed.	Distributions/Collections in parking lot. Building closed.
Worship Center use by others (Weddings, funerals, recitals or meetings)	Open for use by outside groups and individuals.	Limited use of worship center with prior permission from leadership with group size limitations. Common areas shall remain closed	No outside use	No outside use	No outside use

*Precautions include a minimum of wearing masks covering nose and mouth, social distancing of at least 6 feet, frequent sanitization of space and hands.

*These guidelines are subject to change as we learn more about the virus and/or a vaccine is developed and widely administered and are also subject to the orders given by Mayor Adler and other health and governing authorities.

*Hospital capacity, as reported by the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#), remains below 85% in Trauma Service Area (TSA) 'O,' which encompasses 11 counties in central Texas.

*The number of COVID-19 hospitalizations by day, as reported by the Texas Department of State Health Services, does not increase over a 14-day period.