

“Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”



Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ,

Since the middle of March the church building has been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to keep each of us, our community, and society safe. But the church was not closed. We continue to be the church in carrying out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In late April 2020, the White House with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Coronavirus Task Force issued a set of benchmarks to indicate when it would be safe to reopen various kinds of activities, and how many people could safely gather under specific distancing guidelines. The benchmarks involve both state and local public health conditions and the readiness of the states and local communities to provide testing, appropriate health care, and follow-up with people who may have been exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19.

The Reopening Task Force of New Life U.M. Church has been meeting to discern, plan, and implement the reopening of the church building based on the following values and principals:

- Loving our neighbor as ourselves. (Matthew 22:34-40) The safety of our congregation, community, and society is a top priority. All decisions will err on the side of our responsibility to love (responsibly providing for the safety of others)
- Follow the PRINCIPLES AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE REOPENING OF UMC FACILITIES IN MICHIGAN as issued and updated by The Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church which are formed around the benchmarks mentioned above.
- Communication is vital.

Our first step in reopening our building occurred Monday, June 8 with:

1. Staff, volunteers conducting essential ministries, and small group meeting of 10 people or less are permitted in the building.
2. Every person entering the building must:
 - Wear a mask over the nose and mouth unless unable due to medical reasons. If unable to wear a mask due to medical reasons, please call the church office for assistance. Masks are provided if you do not have one.
 - Observe physical distancing (no closer than 6 feet)
 - If one is feeling sick, do not enter the building
 - Sign in on the sheet on the table, answering all the questions.
 - Hand sanitizer is available.
3. Only the Entry area, Bathrooms adjacent, and Narthex area are available for use. All other areas are off limits.

4. Small Group meetings:
 - Must have registered with Ron Kinsey, the Administrative Assistant prior to the meeting.
 - The leader must fill out an attendance sheet with each person signing and answering the question(s). The sheet should be slid under the church office door at the end of the meeting (Please do not enter the church office)
 - Participants are encouraged to clean/disinfect tables and chairs that they used.
5. The Entry, Narthex and Bathrooms will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized each day of use.

Our focus now is discerning and planning for a Relaunch of in person worship while continuing to move toward further reopening the church building. I use the word relaunch purposely as our worship will have a renewed trajectory in several ways.

First and foremost, we are being intentional in relaunching our worshipping “in spirit and truth” - worship is a spiritual encounter with the life changing presence of Jesus Christ. This is primary regardless of the other changes that occur.

Second, to ensure the safety in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic numerous changes will be necessary at least in the short term including: physical distancing, wearing of masks, modifying how we enter/gather/exit, changes to our ministry to children and refraining from congregational singing.

Third, we will continue our internet video presence with worship because this has enabled us to reach more people with the Good News of Jesus. This will mean some changes to better fit the on-line format.

Our tentative relaunch of in person worship is scheduled for **Sunday, July 5**. This date is dependent on the health and safety directives from the State of Michigan being relaxed further to allow for the size of our worship gathering.

Prior to our relaunch of in person worship, we are planning an in person questions and answer time at the church (tentatively July 1), a ZOOM question and answer meeting, and other ways we can have conversations together around our relaunch of worship.

We will continue to communicate updates as they happen. Please keep watching our web site, Facebook page, and Leave & Branches email for updates. Please regularly check our web site (Reopening Info section) for both resources and updates to our Reopening plan.

In closing, please be in prayer. Pray for God to prepare you and our congregation for the relaunch of in-person worship. Pray for openness to the new ways God is guiding us to be in ministry. Pray for wisdom and vision for the leaders of New Life U.M. Pray for those in our community seeking to connect with Jesus Christ.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Tim for the Reopening Task Force

Reopening Task Force

Pastor Tim Wright, Dorothy Farrell, Gary Holland, Doris Shaw, Ron Kinsey