

Guidelines for Small Group Gatherings
St. Simons United Methodist Church
As of August 6, 2020

Love Unconditionally - Serve Enthusiastically - Advance Consistently

The following are the current guidelines for small group gatherings at St. Simons United Methodist Church. *The guidelines are based on recommendations by the CDC.*

Adjustments to the guidelines may have to be made to meet the unique needs and circumstances of our local community. Church and small group leaders should continue to assess whether to postpone, cancel, or significantly reduce the number of attendees for gatherings based on current conditions.

The Risk of COVID-19 Spreading at Gatherings

Lowest risk: Virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings.

More risk: Smaller outdoor and in-person gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear cloth face coverings, do not share objects, and come from the same local area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

Higher risk: Medium-sized in-person gatherings that are adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and with attendees coming from outside the local area.

Highest risk: Large in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area.

Reopening Date

The church facilities will reopen for in-person Sunday School Classes and Small Groups **beginning Sunday, August 16.**

Guidelines

1) Scheduling

***** Please notify the church office of the date and time you plan to start meeting and the location of your group, even if your group has met in the past.** Inform the church office when there are changes to your schedule or location. An accurate, up-to-date schedule is necessary to avoid overlap of groups and to provide cleaning between gatherings.

2) Face Coverings/Masks

Encourage all attendees to bring and use their own face coverings or masks. If needed, masks are available.

3) Space

Limit attendance or seating capacity to allow for social distancing. Groups must be below 50 people, however this number should be reduced based on availability of socially distanced space in your gathering room.

Change seating layout so that people can remain at least 6 feet apart. Please return room setups to the condition in which you found it prior to leaving.

There should be no singing in small group settings. This is due to the increased potential for the spread of the virus as a result of singing within confined spaces. In-person singing in worship was approved by the Church Council because of the larger space and the ability to social distance.

Consider offering Zoom meetings for those who are not able to attend your group in-person. Contact the church office to set-up use of the church's Zoom account.

Consider outdoor activities when possible.

4) Food

Prior to having any food in a gathering, contact Anne Frazier in the office. Any gathering with food must be approved.

5) Hygiene/Cleaning/Disinfection

Adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene will be provided in all meeting areas and restrooms.

Supplies will be provided in all meeting areas to help clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Please feel free to wipe down the meeting area before and after.

Meeting areas will be professionally cleaned and disinfected regularly.

6) Transportation

If church provided transportation is used the drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols including washing hands often, wearing cloth face coverings, and maintaining social distance of riders. Vehicles must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

7) Sickness/Contact Tracing

Take and Keep (for at least 1 Month) attendance records of your gatherings.

Please stay home if you are sick. If you are vulnerable to the virus, please make the best choice regarding your attendance at Sunday School, small groups, or meetings.

Persons who test positive for COVID-19 and feel they may have exposed the group to the virus should contact the group leader. The group leader in turn should notify attendees and the church office while maintaining the individual's confidentiality.

Those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 should stay home, self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.