

# **Asbury United Methodist Church**

## **BUILDING REOPENING PLANS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

As of August 17, 2020  
Asbury United Methodist Church  
1700 Napa Valley Dr  
Little Rock, AR  
501.225.9231 [www.asbury-lr.org](http://www.asbury-lr.org)

## Table of Contents

Introduction

Disclaimer on Changes/Updates

General Expectations for all Ministries

Resuming In Person Worship

Worship Service Team

Ministry Areas

Responding to COVID-19 Exposure

## INTRODUCTION

- **Background**

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact Arkansas in March 2020, Asbury United Methodist church made the decision to suspend all services and meetings held in the building until further notice. The last services to be held in the building were on March 8, 2020. Since that time, the Asbury staff and volunteers have continued offering Sunday morning services and other special worship services virtually.

- **Actions Taken**

The Asbury Lay Leadership Table has met multiple times to plan the reopening of the church building for Sunday morning services. This document is the culmination of our planning process. We have worked closely with Rev. Dede Roberts and Brother Nick Schimmer. Updates have also been shared with the Trustees and Staff Parish Relations Committees. The Lay Leadership Table has made the following decisions:

1. Asbury United Methodist Church will follow the guidance provided by the Bishop of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, who is following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control, the Arkansas Department of Health, and Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson.
2. Our first service back in the building will take place in the Wilson Activity Center. This decision was made in order to provide the safest venue for social distancing.
3. We will hold a rehearsal/training service on Thursday, August 27, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. at Asbury. In this session, volunteers will be trained for specific volunteer roles that will be needed to hold services in the building while the pandemic continues to be a risk to the general public of Central Arkansas.

- **Lay Leadership Table**

The Asbury Lay Leadership Table is made up of the following members and staff:

Rev. Dede Roberts, Senior Pastor

Nick Schimmer, Pastor of Adult Discipleship & Congregational Care

Tom Weir, Pastor Emeritus

Cheryl Cate, Financial Manager

Clark Cogbill, Lay Leader

Stephanie Freeman

Elsie Adkins

Ted Adkins

Richard Bloesch

Joe Hof

Miles Harward

Kara Lee Ford

Jason Stumhofer

Scott Corley

Susan Gele

- **Plan Approvals**

1. Lay Leadership Table and Pastors: August 13, 2020
2. Trustees: August 17, 2020
3. District Superintendent (plan will be shared but approval not required):

## **DISCLAIMER ON CHANGES/UPDATES**

Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent surge in cases, this plan will be revised as necessary, which 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? Our goal is to provide, to the best of our ability, a safe, healthy environment for all. If we cannot provide a safe environment within reasonable means, changes will be mandated. Examples might include but are not limited to:

- A staff member who tests positive for COVID-19
- Participant in worship or on-campus activity tests positive for COVID-19
- Guidance from:
  - The Bishop of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church
  - The Arkansas Department of Health
  - The Governor's Office
  - The Centers for Disease Control

## GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL MINISTRIES

Asbury United Methodist Church will follow the guidance provided by the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church, The Arkansas Department of Health, and the CDC. With this in mind, the following actions are required for all ministries, volunteers, employees and guests at Asbury:

1. Face coverings must be properly worn at all times while inside the church, including hallways, Sanctuary, Wilson Activity Center, warehouse, rest rooms, and any other rooms or areas inside the church. Face coverings must be worn when outside on the Asbury campus if social distancing cannot be followed.
2. Upon entering any part of the campus, all persons must sign-in, have their temperature taken, answer general health questions, and questions regarding any possible COVID-19 exposure.
3. If someone is showing or reporting symptoms of COVID-19, has known exposure to COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19, that person should not enter the building. If there is a pastoral need, please contact the church at 225-9231.
4. If an individual is in the high risk category as defined by the CDC, they are strongly encouraged to limit their exposure and stay home. Asbury will continue to offer worship services and other programs online.
5. Groups meeting in-person, whether at the church or offsite as an acknowledged group of Asbury, should follow CDC and Arkansas Department of Health guidelines, including wearing masks and observing social distancing.
6. There cannot be any unscheduled meetings or group gatherings at the church at this time. Any ministry, group, or individuals wishing to meet in-person at Asbury must schedule their meeting through Cheryl Cate (225-9231 or [cheryl@asbury-lr.org](mailto:cheryl@asbury-lr.org)). This is to ensure that rooms are set up with proper social distancing and that sanitization/cleaning is done properly and timely.
7. Any events involving children, youth or protected persons must follow the Safe Sanctuary Policy of Asbury.

## **WORSHIP SERVICE TEAM**

**Greeters/Check-In: 3 needed** - Volunteers will greet attendees as they arrive, scan temperatures and verify they are on attendance printouts. They will ensure health questions are answered and masks are present. Team members will also be responsible for cleaning hallways and handrails after arrival and departure of attendees.

**Elevator Tender: 1 needed** - Volunteers will ensure the safe operation of the elevator while observing social distancing, and assist members as needed. Team members will assist with cleaning elevator controls after arrival and departure of attendees.

**WAC Ushers: 3 needed** - Volunteers will place seats in appropriate spaced groups according to the attendance list and assist members to the appropriate seats. Bulletins and collections will be on-line. Team members will assist in cleaning chairs and WAC after service.

**Altar Guild: 1 needed** - Volunteers will set out basic service decor, fill and light candles, as well as clean up same after the service.

**Sound/Video/Broadcast: 3 needed** - Volunteers for Sound/Video remain unchanged, with addition of a broadcast associate. Each will assist in cleaning the sound booth, microphones and recording devices after the service.

**Problem Solver: 1 needed** - Volunteer will ensure the safe and efficient operations of the worship team. The team member will assist as needed and provide troubleshooting for unexpected situations.

**Music/Praise: 3-5 needed** - This team will lead music and praise for the service.

## **RESUMING IN PERSON WORSHIP**

As of June 28, 2020, the Arkansas 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.

The Asbury Lay Leadership Table, along with Rev. Dede Roberts and Brother Nick Schimmer, recommend that Asbury not resume in-person worship services before Sunday, September 13. The initial in-person worship schedule will only include one service and will be as follows:

- Sunday Morning Worship - Wilson Activity Center
  - Volunteers arrive to prepare/set up: 9:15 AM
  - Worship Service: 10:00-10:35 AM
  - Cleaning of space: 10:45-11:15 AM
- Sunday Morning Worship - Wilson Activity Center (second service)
  - When Asbury UMC is ready to add another service on Sunday mornings, a second service will be offered in the WAC, following the cleaning of the first service. The timing of the first service may be adjusted when a second service is added.

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, pastors, volunteers and congregation.
2. Individuals and families will be required to make a reservation to attend in-person worship.
3. Participants will enter through the West entrance of the building (in the back of the church).
4. Greeters will check you in, take your temperature, and ask you questions provided by the CDC.
5. You will be required to wear a face covering at all times when in the church.
6. So that we can easily greet one another, please wear your church name tag. If you do not have a name tag, you may contact the church office to request one.
7. We ask that you proceed directly to the Wilson Activity Center and do not go into other parts of the building. Those taking the elevator will be limited to one person at a time.
8. Ushers will seat you, so that social distancing can be observed.
9. Once seated, we ask that you please remain at your seat (sitting or standing) unless you need to visit the restroom.
10. There will be no nursery or children programs provided. Children are welcome to worship with their family.
11. Once the service is over please exit through the West door. Ushers will guide the congregation out of the building while maintaining social distancing. Please do not congregate in the building. Once out of the building, please do not congregate in the parking lot.
12. For safety reasons, there will be no refreshments, snacks, or use of water fountains.
13. We ask that only one person or family group at a time in the restrooms.



### *Communion*

When communion is offered in worship, individual 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 at this time.

### *Bulletins, Hymnals, Pew Bibles*

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, we will not be providing bulletins, hymnals, pew Bibles, and paper items. Necessary information will be displayed on the video screens in the WAC. A bulletin will be sent by email before the service.

### *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 Asbury through regular, faithful giving. Gifts can be mailed to the church, given on-line, electronic funds transfer, and text-to-give.

### *Congregational Singing/Passing of the Peace*

Following the guidelines of the Arkansas Conference, there will be no congregational singing at this time. Additionally, there will be no passing of the peace. We strongly urge everyone to maintain social distance and refrain from handshakes, fist bumps, hugs, or touching of anyone outside of your immediate family.

### *Nursery*

There will be no nursery or child care provided for any worship service. Children are welcome to attend worship with their families.

### *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.

### *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 church office for information and scheduling.

## **MINISTRY AREAS**

### **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 the church office. Asbury will assign appropriate rooms, entrances, and meeting time so that social distancing guidelines can be followed. We do ask that groups take attendance by emailing an attendance list to [cheryl@asbury-lr.org](mailto:cheryl@asbury-lr.org).

Bible Studies, Prayer Groups, UMW, and other small groups must contact the church office to arrange a meeting space, date, time, and to confirm the number of people who will be meeting.

### **Children's Programming**

#### *Sunday School*

The Arkansas Conference has directed that Children's Sunday School will not meet at this time.

#### *Nursery and childcare*

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

### **Youth Ministry**

Brother Nick Schimmer has established a plan for resuming youth activities which are occurring on Sunday evenings outside at Asbury.

### **Missions**

Mission groups, such as Stone Soup, that meet outside the church are asked to wear masks, practice social distancing, and follow guidelines of the organization where they are meeting and the guidelines outlined by the CDC and the Arkansas Department of Health.

### **Music Ministry**

Meetings and practices for music, choir and handbell groups will be determined by the pastors and music leaders. All guidelines identified in this document apply.

### **Outside Groups and Special Events**

In general, we are not allowing outside groups to use our facility at this time. Requests may be received by the church office.

### **Senior Adult Ministry**

Due to our seniors being in an at risk category, we recommend that ministries by senior adults be conducted via video conference or other online platform.

## **RESPONDING TO COVID-19 EXPOSURE**

We would appreciate anyone who has been on-campus and either tests positive or has close contact with someone who tests positive to notify the church immediately. These are to be reported to either Rev. Dede Roberts, Brother Nick Schimmer, or Cheryl Cate.

Notification of exposure will be conducted by the church office with assistance from the Lay Leadership Table if needed. 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.