

## **Apison UMC**

### **Reopening Plan:**

#### **Apison UMC Reopening Plan Goal:**

AUMC currently has one reopening goal, to make in-person worship available beginning Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>. We have no immediate plans to resume Sunday School or other in-person activities in the building without approved follow-up plans, and we are committed to having online worship and other online activities available as a normal part of Church life.

#### **Time:**

We will begin with one service at 11:00 am consisting of in-person worship, with restrictions in place to prevent more than 40 people being in the sanctuary at a time. (Following the seating rules prescribed by the conference for social distancing, we believe 40 would be our maximum capacity.) To control the number in our service, we will have some of our members prepared to worship in the Fellowship Hall, following all of our social distancing and other guidelines via livestream if we exceed our maximum number of safe attendance. We will use a screen in the Fellowship Hall to stream our service from the sanctuary for those who are sitting in there. Seating will be arranged by family unit with 6 feet social distancing between family units in the fellowship hall.

#### **Seating Arrangements and Required Behaviors:**

We will use every other pew (excluding the choir area, which will not be used) and ask household members to sit together, distancing themselves from other households by at least six

feet. All Bibles, hymnals, pads, pencils, etc., have been removed from the sanctuary pews. To attend in-person worship, we must have registration info from each attendee including all relevant and necessary contact information prescribed by the Conference. (Please see below for process to get this information if we do not already have it)

Each attendee will be asked to put on masks before entering the building and keep them on once inside. (Only children under the age of 2 are not required to wear masks). We will have a bounteous supply of free masks available at all times for those who do not bring their own. They also will be encouraged to use sanitizer before entering the building and bring their own Bibles. Anyone refusing to abide by the basic requirements will politely be asked to leave by the church's security team, which already has standing rules of engagement for handling willful criminal trespass. (In short, security is to isolate and observe the trespasser and contact the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department.)

Offerings will be taken in 2 baskets, one at the front and one at the rear of the sanctuary. These will be set out before the service, then taken up after the beginning of the service, then put out again at the end of the service. Offerings made during in-person worship will be counted on Sunday, then left in the safe until later in the week for deposit, with the counters taking appropriate measures to avoid contamination. AUMC will continue to encourage electronic and mail-in giving.

**Entry/Exit:**

There will be two designated points for building entry and exit, with members of the security team, other volunteers, and signage to control social distancing in those areas. This will be through the easily identifiable double glass front doors, leading into the narthex, which flows up the ramp, then into the sanctuary. One additional entry will be available for handicap access into the fellowship hall via the door near the playground, which then flows directly to the sanctuary. All other entrances to the building will be inaccessible from the outside, although they still will open from the inside for emergency exit. Along the entry path, volunteers will look for people without masks, offering masks and hand sanitizer as needed. Before worshipers complete their entry into the building, a volunteer will check off on the registration list the names of those in attendance or add the names and contact information of any first-time visitors. This list would be used in the event we need to communicate that someone in a worship service has tested positive for COVID-19. We will not be assessing people's temperatures as they enter.

**“No Touch” Protocols:**

All aspects of worship, including entry and exit, will follow "no touch" protocols. There will be no congregational singing, no passing of the peace, no greeting by the pastor after the service, etc., until we receive clearance from the conference.

**Communion:**

We have purchased individual sealed juice cups with wafer included. On the Sundays we have communion, these will be available and waiting in the pews for those who attend. Each family unit will be the only ones who unseal their individual communion cups and bread, and the pastor

will follow all sanitization requirements as he places these individually in the pews before anyone arrives.

**Baptisms:**

Any baptisms that are requested will be performed only after consultation with the District Superintendent.

**Leaving Worship:**

After a worship service ends, exit will happen in a controlled manner, with people dismissed by rows, row nearest the narthex first.

**Worship Team:**

The worship team will consist of our Music Director and Assistant Music Director. Computer and sound board operators will also be in the audio-visual booth located at the back of the sanctuary. These people will always maintain appropriate social distancing and wear masks unless singing or speaking. Each worship leader will have their own microphone, with no sharing allowed. The worship team members will remain in place at the front of the sanctuary until all worshipers have exited.

**Sanitizing:**

Volunteers or paid staff will sanitize before the weekly service, and before any other event, wiping down all contact surfaces. Volunteers or paid staff will clean the two accessible restrooms before the weekly service and before any other event. All cleaning will be done

according to the recommendations of the Conference. The church has taken an inventory of available supplies and is acquiring appropriate sanitizers, masks and other cleaning supplies. We will not launch in-person worship on July 12<sup>th</sup> if these items are not in the building. Sanitizing of the building has been an ongoing priority of the paid cleaning staff since the COVID-19 closure began. We have consulted with Church Mutual Insurance and understand our plans need to be in alignment with Centers for Disease Control recommendations. We believe the Holston Conference recommendations we are following go beyond the CDC recommendations.

**Communication:**

The resumption of in-person worship, including details about the requirements for receiving contact information and expected behaviors, will be communicated in the following ways: through the website, which also feeds AUMC's Facebook page; through a video we will post on our Church YouTube Channel, via church-wide e-mail; through the sending of a letter to our regular mail address list; and through our automated phone tree system. An important part of communication will be to encourage people in vulnerable groups to continue to worship online rather than attending worship in person; however, we will have a set aside section for them for Sunday mornings during our 11:00AM service.

**Responsibilities:**

AUMC's Pastor has the ultimate responsibility to determine whether the worship procedures are safe week to week. This plan has been developed using the Conference's "Worksheet for Protocol Planning and Preparation." The Pastor, and the Church Custodian, Amber Lowry, are responsible for ensuring the presence of essential supplies. Amber also is procuring COVID-19

signage. Cleaning teams will be led by Amber Lowry. The Pastor will be responsible for ensuring the Worship Checklist has been completed before in-person worship services are held. AUMC will forward to the district office a signed copy of the Church Compliance Certification upon district approval of this plan.

**Outdoor Worship:**

We plan to begin outdoor worship on Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Attendance will be taken by a volunteer who will take information down from people when they arrive. All protocols listed above will be followed including masks, social distancing, etc. Our outdoor worship service will be at 10am due to heat and shade considerations. Attendees will sit in chairs in designated areas. Attendance will be made up of 4 or 5 families so families will be asked to stay in groups consisting of only those in their immediate households, and social distance between other household family units at all times. The church building and bathrooms will be closed. We will continue our online services for those who cannot attend in person.

To take up the offering we will have 2 5 gallon buckets available at the front of the church, families will be invited to come up to the front of the church and drop their offering off in the bucket where it will be placed securely in the church afterward, then deposited later in the week.

**Reopening Plan Approved by the AUMC Church Leadership Council via email on 6-24-20.**