

**Covenant United Methodist Church
Greer, South Carolina
Plan of Action in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic**

We thank you for choosing Covenant to be your church home! As we live in and through the Covid-19 Pandemic, we are looking to a future where we can resume our new normal as the Body of Christ.

When coming on campus individually, we ask you to do the following (signs at all entrance doors on campus with the following bullet points):

- Wear a Mask.
- Maintain social distancing (except for families who live in the same household).
- Be sure to stay 6 feet apart.
- No handshakes or fist bumps.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Smile, Jesus loves you!!!

Hand sanitizing stations are located at designated entrances depending on the church worship service or event on the church schedule. At any time, if you or a family member feel uncomfortable about attending an in-person gathering of any size, we ask you to join us via *LiveStream* through our website (covumc.org), via *Facebook Live*, our *YouTube channel* or via *Zoom* meeting. We do not want you to feel in any way pressured to attend our worship services or events in-person during this pandemic.

Signage Throughout Campus & Social Distancing Spots

Parking Lots/Sidewalks (additional signage will be needed—A-frame poly in specified locations)

Entrances (see “When you come on campus...” statement above)

Hallways—Three Sign Reminders: A Smile Is Better Than A Handshake/This Is A Hug Free Zone/Six Feet Is The New Personal Space; Social Distancing Spots (possible sources: <https://www.signs.com/social-distancing-signs/>; Signarama; The UPS Store; Vista Print)

All updates to Church Covid-19 will be posted to our website with a click banner on the front page (starting with the most recent and going back to March 2020. Relevant Covenant Christian Academy Covid-19 Updates will be posted on this portion of the church website).

Updates are available at <https://covumc.org/covid-19/>.

Phases

Phase 1 has been happening since this all began (March 2020): with): minimum people present on campus to provide webcast-only services (traditional and contemporary) composed of church staff and media team volunteers. **We ask that no children ages 5 and under attend these events in the sanctuary or any other space where our worship services are filmed, streamed or recorded.** Most staff works from home or is furloughed during this phase. We will continue to have minimal business staff operations on campus.

Presented & Approved at Church Council on 10/20/2020
Pandemic Task Force Will Study & Write Protocols for Phases 3 through 7.

Phase 2 will be a worship ONLY format. We will offer three worship opportunities:

- 8:00 AM—Traditional
- 9:30 AM—Contemporary
- 11:00 AM—Traditional

There will be ONLY **one entrance** to come through for the worship services (Welcome Center—until further notice). You will be asked to register your attendance online; bring your own Bible (BYOB); bring your own mask (BYOM); and to be patient.

Some may ask about the time between services, we are trying to limit the number who gather together until the pandemic subsides because we need time to clean the sanctuary surfaces and bathroom surfaces between worship experiences.

Disposable worship bags will be provided to children ages 3 and above. The bags will be packaged in a safe and sanitary way and will be given to children to use during worship and taken home by the children.

Remember, we are all in this together for the safety and welfare of all involved in this new normal.

Phase 3 (TBD) will be worship format along with youth (middle school/high school) and older children (4th - 5th grades). Check-in for each age group will be a single entrance. The children's ministry entrance will be the outside breezeway of the Lower Well (1st floor of the children's building). The middle school ministry will be at the outside breezeway of the Loft Entrance (upper gym hallway outside). The high school ministry will be at the outside of the Gym entrance (lower parking lot). Each area will have hand sanitizing stations, masks for adults, IR thermometers, radios, and iPads for check-in/census purposes. Once checked in, each student will receive a printed name tag and will be taken to their floor spot in the teaching/activity space.

Each entrance will need to have the following persons (minimum of 9-**safe sanctuary/safe practices trained adults** for each ministry area):

- Greeters who check temperature and make sure each student has used hand sanitizer.
- Census takers who confirm online check-in and account for persons who have actually walked through the door. During this time, we will not use our touch screen systems for the parent(s) or student(s) to check themselves in.
- Guides who take students from staging area to teaching/activity area and also help with crowd control and social distancing.
- Teachers/facilitators who provide content and activities in the large gathering rooms for each of these ministries.

Each student participant regardless of age (except for children ages two and below) will be asked to BYOB and BYOM to ministry events for the foreseeable future.

Phase Three Worship Change for Children in worship (August 2020):

Worship Service Updates Starting August 30, 2020—

Announcement—Families, we are now welcoming 3-years old and older into worship services on Sunday mornings. We hope that this allows many of you to worship as a family. Please know we do require masks for all who join us for Sunday worship. At this time, we have a limited number of disposable child-sized masks available, so please prepare to bring one for your child. We have worship bags available for any child who joins us for worship.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Phase 3 Execution of Youth Plan—Fall 2020:

Fall 2020 Programming/Events

September 2020—Swag Pack Drop Off - Drive by our student's houses and drop off a 'swag' pack with a hat, tee, wristband, stickers, COV Student Choir goodie bag, and a gospel of John booklet.

November 14—Rendezvous 2020 (Fall Retreat) - Day Trip to Look Up Lodge (or Asbury) -- Two Worship Sessions / Outdoor Activities for Fall Retreat - style day.

December 16 & 18—Middle & High School Christmas Parties - Potentially meeting in backyards for a Christmas party together.

Youth Group Sunday Nights—

Begin: Sunday, October 18, 2020

End: Sunday, December 6th, 2020

Times: 4:00 - 6:00 PM or 6:00 - 8:00 PM (MS & HS Combined for Worship & Teaching (6:00-7:00) ; Separate for small groups (7:00 - 8:00 PM) Location: - Outside (Gym as Back-Up) - Bring your own chair. Set up socially distant in the parking lot. - Advantages: Easy marking for student seating/ No mixed air breathing - Disadvantages: Low/no tech; weather-conditional - Small Groups - Scatter around the parking lot based on gender and phase (MS or HS) - Safety - Masks required for leaders; requested for students - Check in space through tents (middle and high) - Temperature Checks - Pre-registration (cap at 60 students for Fall season) - Social Distancing measures communicated from top-down leadership.

Phase 3 Execution of Children's Ministry Plan—Fall 2020 (varies from original description above):

- Continue ministry virtually for the fall.
- Monthly boxes to be sent home with the children.
 - They will be broken out into a preschool (2-4 years old) box and an elementary (kindergarten-5th grade) box.
 - They will contain activities that tie in with the monthly theme. Some activities will be for the individual child and others will be for the family to do together.

Presented & Approved at Church Council on 10/20/2020
Pandemic Task Force Will Study & Write Protocols for Phases 3 through 7.

- Memory verse activities, prayer activities, coloring sheets, and games are items to be expected.
- They will be available right around the first of each month.
- The first boxes, that will go out before September begins, will include a special drive up treat for those who register.
- Weekly newsletters and social media interaction will continue.
 - Newsletters contain weekly, age-level appropriate videos lessons and an activity. They also keep families up to date on what is happening.
 - We currently use Instagram and Facebook to connect with families.
- For volunteers, we are looking into meeting together virtually so that we can touch base and stay involved. We hope to make this into a small group time and read a book together, possibly starting with “Lead Small” by Orange. This way, we can use this time away to prepare for even better interaction when we can all gather together again with the children.
- Weekly Storytime will resume on social media and will grow to include volunteers. This is a great way to check in with our families.
- We may provide times throughout the semester that we can connect virtually with the children through Zoom.
- Families are still encouraged to come to worship together if they are able and comfortable. This is recommended for children age 5 and older.
- Events – We hope to work with other staff to turn CovFest into a drive through event. Perhaps the BBQ and Bake sale could be registered and served drive through style. Another area of the parking lot could have volunteers with tables instead of trunks, decorated. Candy would be prepackaged and handed out by volunteers wearing gloves and masks.

Phase 4 (TBD) will be a worship format along with children and youth describe described in phase 3 plus the following ages: K-3 through 5th Grade

Children’s Ministry—Spring 2021 Tentative Plans:

- If it is safe, we will propose to begin bringing children back onto Covenant’s campus.
 - With the start of the new year, we would begin phasing in our oldest children and working our way down to the younger ages.
 - The groupings of children would be as follows: 3rd-5th grade, Kindergarten-2nd, 3-4 year olds, then 2 and under.
 - Age groups would phase in with 4 weeks in between. For example, the 3rd through 5th graders would come back and then 4 weeks later the kindergarten through 2nd graders would join them.
- Families will preregister their children just as they do for worship. By doing so, we can ensure that rooms are not overly full.

Presented & Approved at Church Council on 10/20/2020
 Pandemic Task Force Will Study & Write Protocols for Phases 3 through 7.

- Entering into the building would be as follows:
 - Families would bring their children to the front doors of the Children’s Building where everyone’s temperature will be checked by a staff member, everyone will be masked (we will encourage children 3 and up to wear masks), and someone will be there to check in each child.
 - Children will receive a name tag and their adult will be given a matching security tag for pick-up.
 - Families will drop their children off at those doors with a group of volunteers who will walk them to their classroom.
 - Leaders will receive children at their room and will help children remain adequately distanced.
 - Each child will have individualized supplies and hand sanitizer will be available.
 - When programming concludes, volunteers will be present to escort children to their families as they arrive. Adults must present their child’s matching security tag to dismiss their child.
- As we phase children back into programming in person, online lessons will still be provided, and we will continue to touch base with families.
- If families or children are feeling ill, we will encourage them to participate virtually instead of coming on campus.

Phase 5 (TBD—early as March 2021 or as late as June 2021) will be worship format along with children and youth described in Phase 4 plus the following ages: Nursery (12-weeks to 2 years of age—This age group may be asked to stay with parents in worship indefinitely).

Phase 6 (TBD—early as January 2021 or as late as April 2021) will be worship format along with children and youth described in Phase 5 plus adult Sunday School times as follows practicing size and space specifications posted on the door of each Sunday school classroom. **Until phase 6 arrives, all adult classes, large youth gatherings and small groups are encouraged to take advantage of *Zoom.us*; *Facebook LIVE*; *Google Meet Ups*; or *Web X (Cisco Systems)* to meet and have community online. Outside venues with proper social distancing and mask wearing are encouraged as weather permits.**

Phase 7 (early as January 2021 or as late as June 2021) will be all activities and events resume on campus with the latest social distancing guidelines in place.

Bulletins

Bulletins will be made available to those who desire to have them (available in an online format ONLY at <https://covumc.org/live/>). They will be on a podium for pick-up at a later date (TBD) at the entrance into the sanctuary. Ushers will not be distributing them at this point.

Hymnals & Friendship Pads

Hymnals and friendship pad use are suspended until further notice. Each participant will be encouraged to register online through the website (covumc.org/live). All words for songs and liturgy for all worship experiences will be projected on the screens.

Offering

Online platforms of giving (covumc.org/give; *PayPal*; *Tithely*)

Offering Boxes Within Sanctuary Space (one at each entrance/exit). Two offering plates will be placed on altar table on non-Communion Sundays.

Communion

Communion will be served in individually wrapped single cups with both elements.

It will be administered by gloved and masked servers. Preparers following the same protocol. All persons will be asked to maintain social distancing of 6-feet apart. Elements will be consumed after persons exit the sanctuary and proceed outside.

Communion will be given in age level ministry areas on prescribed communion Sundays (1st Sunday of the month) with same protocols in the Spring or Summer of 2021.

Bathrooms

Please pay attention to the signs posted on all bathroom doors. You are expected to follow signage guidelines and practice social distancing of 6-feet apart.

<https://www.safetysign.com/products/1746/did-you-wash-them-sign?s=st1ztf23zskf9wzgp396zbpl8>

Cleaning Between Events

Recruit servant leaders (initially church/nursery staff, then key church leadership, and then volunteers) to disinfect door handles, light switches, handrails, etc.—before, during, and gatherings. Set out 4ft tables with hand-sanitizing dispensers, hard surface wipes, disposable gloves, masks, and paper towels/tissues and make sure they are all stocked. Purchase additional trash receptacles to place by all doors and at each table.

Recruit and train servant leaders (via *Zoom* & *YouTube channel*) on greeting people with a smile and friendly tone versus a hug and a handshake.

The New Normal

Masks, hand sanitizing stations, and handwashing will be encouraged and continued for all ages until further notice.

Sources:

Covenant Church Staff

<https://hopenetworkministries.org/the-first-sundays-back/>

CDC Guidelines for Closing/Re-Opening/Interim Guidance (March 2020-Present) www.cdc.gov

SC DHEC www.scdhec.gov

SC DSS www.sccildcare.org & dss.sc.gov

Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company www.brotherhoodmutual.com

South Carolina United Methodist Conference <https://www.umcsc.org/bestpractices/>

The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church

<https://www.flumc.org/files/content/relaunch+guidelines+-+5-27-20.pdf>

Apex UMC (multi-site church in Apex, North Carolina) <https://www.apexumc.org/coronavirus/>

The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church

The North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church

The Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church

The Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church

The Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church