**REVISIONED FHC PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN**



Ver. 12.20.2021

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for Forest Hills Church when responding to regional pandemic conditions. **Please note, this plan is subject to additional decisions made by staff and volunteers which are driven by considering recommendations of state, local, and conference**

**Authorities and tempered based on local conditions.** This document assumes that no public space can be kept germ-free, so ultimately *each individual is responsible for their own actions and decisions concerning their health and well-being.*

Forest Hills Church remains primarily focused on our mission – to make disciples. We do that by loving God and others, growing in our faith, and serving as we feel led. We believe ministry is an essential life service, however loving others includes taking reasonable precautions to protect people involved in church ministry and events.

BASIC EXPECTATIONS

* Each phase builds upon the one(s) prior – make sure to reference previous phases when changing to new status.
* Everyone has a different level of comfort with what they feel ok with.
  + Offer options
* Participants requested to stay home if they have any symptoms or recent exposure.
  + This includes congregation, staff, volunteers, external groups, etc.
* Mask use is highly encouraged starting in the Blue Phase but is not required unless mandated by government authorities.
  + Staff mask usage should be tailored to their pastoral needs and needs/comfort of others they’re meeting with.
* External groups are included in this document as “all groups” or “groups.”

PANDEMIC PHASES

* Progression from one phase to another will occur based on a review of the change in guidance and data from state, local, and conference authorities. Changing phases requires the approval of the Lay Leader, who should receive advice from pastoral staff, Action Ministry Team, Church Management Ministry Team, others as needed.

* At present, Church Conference has recommended that county data be used in helping to guide phase change decisions. A combination of vaccination rates and the positivity rate in the community along with other local data is integral to making an informed decision.
  + <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html>

* + <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

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| **GREEN**  **PHASE** | Business as usual, normal operation.  No restrictions in place. |

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| **BLUE**  **PHASE** | Statewide infection is low  SEE PAGE ONE FOR DATA SOURCES AND CONFERENCE  RECOMMENDATIONS    *No specific regional concern*.     * **Food Service** o Food service, including coffee shop, may be offered provided shared utensils and condiments are limited.   + - Consider current state and CDC guidelines for restaurants and bars.     - Gloves and masks are to be worn by servers and food handlers.     - Hand sanitizer should be located in the near proximity.     - Encourage social distancing during seated meals. * **Nursery** o Nursery care may be provided.   + Location provided to place used toys for sanitation. * **Wednesday Night Activities**    + Grow Groups and ministry teams may offer a virtual option for meetings. * **Worship**    + Offer online and virtual participation as able.   + Offering taken with stationary location or online.   + Consider modified communion practices. * **Additional**    + Handwashing signage in restrooms to continue to encourage hygiene practices.   + Increase sanitation of high-touch surfaces, including door handles, countertops, restrooms, and pews, kid’s activity bags, etc.   + All groups using the church agree to notify the office if a participant reports they have become ill.    Church will provide sanitation supplies to wipe down surfaces of any space used. |
| **YELLOW**  **PHASE** | Statewide infection rate is moderate, has dropped or leveled off  SEE PAGE ONE FOR DATA  SOURCES AND CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS    *Regional concern is low.*    **All BLUE PHASE guidelines apply with the following additions:**     * **Food Service**   + Food service and coffee shop **may be available but could be limited** to special events when warranted.   + Community meals now require social distancing and eating within family units whenever possible.   + Individual servings, prewrapped food, condiments, etc. to be considered. * **Nursery**    + Nursery toys will be limited. * **Wednesday Night Activities**    + Small groups including Grow groups and ministry teams will be virtual with limited in-person options. * **Worship**   + Outdoor worship is optional   + Indoor worship with added precautions:   + Ventilation considerations.   + Pews are to be roped off for social distancing.   + If more than one service is offered, plan for one-way flow.   + Pew Bibles, hymnals, tissues etc. may be available in the pews.   + Monitor guidelines for low-touch surfaces.   + Assumption based on there being one service per week with limited sharing within family unit in pew. * Offer online and virtual participation for worship events. * Communion practices to be modified to reduce possible community contamination.    No common bread basket at this time.  • **Additional**   * If a receiving line is to be incorporated in a special event, use floor markers or similar method for social distancing. * Name-tags, sign-up forms, and lobby iPads will not be available. * Sign-up may be accommodated by a volunteer or online form. |

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| **ORANGE**  **PHASE** | Infection rate considered high or rising  SEE PAGE ONE FOR DATA SOURCES AND  CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS    *People encouraged to minimize non-essential trips and visits.*    **All BLUE and YELLOW PHASE guidelines apply with the following additions:**     * **Food Service**    + Food service is not offered. * **Nursery**    + Nursery care is not provided. * **Wednesday Night Activities**   + Small groups including Grow groups, Wednesday night activities, and ministry teams meet virtually –limited in-person based on room size, group size, etc. * **Worship**   + Worship services encouraged outdoors or drive-in (when applicable.)   + Otherwise Online worship preferred   + In-person worship is possible with reduce capacity of 30 attendees (25% of normal attendance.)     - No receiving line.     - Bulletins and other handouts distributed by volunteers wearing gloves and face masks. (Low touch). * **Additional**   + Funerals and Weddings will be considered by a case by case basis with reduced capacity limitations. |
| **RED**  **PHASE** | Infection rate considered high  SEE PAGE ONE FOR DATA SOURCES AND CONFERENCE  RECOMMENDATIONS    *This may include shelter-in-place order, mandate, or no non-essential travel from government.*    **All BLUE, YELLOW, and ORANGE PHASE guidelines apply with the following additions:**     * **Food Service**    + See ORANGE PHASE * **Nursery**    + See ORANGE PHASE * **Wednesday Night Activities**    + Small groups including Grow groups, Wednesday night activities, and ministry teams meet virtually. * **Worship**    + Worship services to be offered online only.     - The church building may be open on Sunday mornings for limited participants to play the online service, however this is not advertised. We recognize there are those who have a spiritual need or technical limitations requiring in-person participation. * **Additional**    + As an essential business the church building remains open, however no on-site events are scheduled except for Community Care. |

PASTORAL CARE AND VISITS are considered to be at the discretion of the individual Forest Hills pastoral staff:

* Visits and pastoral care are considered essential ministry. In-person visits are the decision of the visiting pastor, regardless of current phase color.
* Visits may be limited by congregate living facilities or other healthcare establishments.
* We acknowledge that each individual has a different level of comfort with different circumstances and there are times where only they can decide if a certain element or event should occur.
* The pastoral staff of Forest Hills operates out of love for their congregation, desire to continue ministry in reasonable way, and out of concern for all – we trust their decisions.

COMMUNICATION PLANNING

* A change in phase will be communicated via email to all staff, AMT, CMMT, and other key ministry leaders.
  + Current phase, with key details will be posted on the church website.
* Exposure Communication
  + Inform those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.
* Communication is needed to inform the congregation of all worship options, procedures, and requirements.
  + Use social media and email for main communication.
    - Limited phone calls may be needed.
  + Encourage members to stay home if they feel unsure or if they are sick.
  + Create a communication plan for staff and families for self-reporting of symptoms and notification of exposures and closures.
    - Due to privacy concerns, the name of the sick person is not required, and should not be requested. If known, the name is not be shared.
* All groups are required to notify the church if any participant tests positive and was within their incubation period while at church.
  + Due to privacy concerns, the name of the sick person is not required, and should not be requested. If known, the name is not be shared.

EXTERNAL BUILDING USE – NON FHUMC ORGANIZAITONS Guidelines

* Will be required to follow current FHUMC Pandemic restrictions.

ADDITIONAL REFERNCES

* <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html>
* <https://www.minnesotaumc.org/regatheringplan>
* <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp>
* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>