



Wesley United Methodist Church
544 Government Street, Baton Rouge, LA. 70802
June 18, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you are probably aware, Governor Edwards lifted the statewide mask mandate for Churches and gave the authority to local municipalities, churches and private businesses to determine how they will handle COVID-19 during gatherings moving forward.

Places of worship were exempt from mask mandates and crowd-capacity limitations even before this last announcement on May 23, 2021.

While there is no longer a state-wide mask mandate, this does not mean we are completely free to operate in a manner experienced in the years prior to the national COVID-19 pandemic.

There are still some unvaccinated and high-risk people in our community and church. Therefore, the use of masks and even more importantly, the acquisition of the COVID-19 vaccine is still the most important safeguard in preventing the spread of the Corona Virus.

In considering how to proceed, it is important to remember that Wesley United Methodist is different from many other churches in our state and community. The vast majority of churches are smaller, in rural areas and have far fewer attendees on Sunday mornings than Wesley does traditionally. These factors place many other churches in a lower-risk category for the spread of COVID-19. Wesley United Methodist Church, on the other hand, is in an urban population center, and on past religious holidays we have had hundreds of people attend onsite worship.

Louisiana's current order allows large-capacity indoor facilities the option of choosing between seventy-five percent (75%) capacity without mask enforcement, or one hundred percent (100%) capacity with one hundred percent (100%) mask enforcement. While the church is technically exempt from this guideline, the spirit of it seems wise. Wearing masks allows us greater psychological freedom and frees us to relax other restrictions.

With that in mind, here is the policy for Wesley United Methodist Church:

- All procedures outlined in this Policy Statement become effective as of 12:01AM Saturday June 19, 2021.
- All individuals who enter the church, no matter the reason, are required to wear a mask while inside any part of the church building.
- Individuals will be required **to use sanitizing agents upon entering the church; however, they will not be required to have their temperature taken.**
- All individuals who enter the church must sign in and out (printed name, date, time of entry and time of departure) at one of the sign-in stations.
- Sign-in will occur upon entering the church and sign out upon departure.

- Ushers will be present to assist the congregation in complying with these established COVID-19 policies.
- Normal Church service will be limited to sixty minutes. Exceptions may be made on a nonrecurring basis and only for special occasions.
- A sanitation station, with hand sanitizers, disinfectant, extra masks, additional sanitation supplies and gloves will be located near the church's rear entrance for use by all who enter.

This will free us up to relax the following restrictions:

- Full-capacity seating in worship and classroom spaces will be limited and space will be allocated prior to each service based on specific request for attendance from members and in accordance with the designated seating section diagram.
- Use of tape to designate specific seating sections will be used and areas will be allotted, to the best of our ability, in a manner which allows for 6 feet of separation between individuals not in the same family.
- Use of hymnals, offering plates, and other shared items in worship will not be authorized.
- Collections baskets for contributions, tithes and offerings will be located at the rear of the church for use upon entering and departing the church.
- The choir will be limited to 10 individuals plus the 4 instrumentalists. The choir will utilize masks normally, and be unmasked only during selected musical performances, period or events.
- We will not initially resume end of service fellowship and other normal parts of community life within the church.
- Gatherings outside the church before or after church services are not limited in any way.
- This policy will be posted within the church and made accessible to all who enter the church

It will be a week or so before we can fully implement the procedures above and no doubt, we will have to revise some of these changes (we need to coordinate with ushers, stewards, greeters and others. We shall begin working on this right away.

Our purpose for continuing to wear masks is to provide protection for high-risk people in our church community. We also want people to feel safe coming to worship and to know that we are a church that cares about their health and well-being.

We appreciate your patience, and we know it has not been easy.

We should all be proud of how our congregation met the challenges associated with COVID-19 so far. Let us all continue to pray and know in our hearts that the season of this pandemic will be behind us soon.

Yours in Christ,
 The Administrative Council
 Wesley United Methodist Church