

# **Hamline Church United Methodist**

## *Guide to Re-entering the Church Building after Closure*



### **PHASES OF OPERATION OVERVIEW**

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#### **Level 3: Red Light Status**

Stop all non-critical gatherings. Essential workers only. This is the "Stay in Love with God" and stay home phase of our ministry.

#### **Level 2: Yellow Light Status**

Cautionary Return. This will cover a number of months and group sizes. We want to "Do Good" as restrictions are lifted. This means a gradual return to gatherings of various sizes and doing so in a cautionary manner.

#### **Level 1: Green Light Status**

When we reach the "Do No Harm" phase—it will be because the virus is contained, and everyone is safe. Permission will be granted to communities of faith to return to full activity and mass gatherings will be permitted. This will be in place only as church leadership is confident in the care of the community of faith. Green lighting for all activities will likely be guided by testing protocol for asymptomatic COVID-19 carriers, antibody testing, therapeutic drug therapies aggressively caring for those who have contracted COVID-19, and approval and availability of a COVID-19 vaccine.

### **PHASE TRANSITION**

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The Response Team will determine when a shift in levels will occur. COVID-19 cases may spike, decrease, and increase again. The team will assess the threat and issue a notice to any changes in status.

*Assessment of the phase in which church operations function will occur monthly and as needed, by members of the response team (Church Council, Pastor, Office Manager, and Director of Finance & Facilities). Primary sources of information include the Minnesota Annual Conference, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Minnesota Department of Health, State of Minnesota Office of the Governor, Church Mutual Insurance, OSHA, and the World Health Organization. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Amy Perna at [aperna@hamlinechurch.org](mailto:aperna@hamlinechurch.org).*

### **MARKERS FOR MOVING BETWEEN PHASES OF OPERATION**

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The following will be taken into consideration when moving between levels of operation:

1. What is the recommendation regarding mass gatherings from the Minnesota Department of Health, the State of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church?
2. Is a thorough plan encompassing protection of participants, building preparation, and program procedures in place to prevent the spread of COVID 19?
3. Have participants been informed and trained in proper protocols?
4. Are necessary supplies available and ready for use (masks, cleaning supplies)?

## OFFICE ETTIQUETTE

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In phase 3 all non-essential staff and volunteers work from home. In phase 2, office staff and volunteers work from home, if possible. If staff or volunteers need to come into the office and their schedule is not yet established – they will let others know their plans to ensure everyone’s safety. During both phases:

- Wear a mask, maintain a safe distance (6-10 feet) from others, practice good hygiene.
- Sanitize common areas and workspaces when you enter and before you leave. Wash your hands when you arrive and before you leave.
- Encourage others that you work with, meet or interact with to do the same.
- Always set high standards for safety and model the best behavior.
- Stay home if you feel sick or have been diagnosed with Covid-19 in the last 14 days or if you have come in contact with someone who has been diagnosed.

## PHASES OF OPERATION IN DETAIL

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### Level 3: Red Light Status

#### STATUS

Hamline Church United Methodist will be in Red Light status until May 31, 2020 at which point that status will be reassessed. This is the "Stay in Love with God" and stay home phase of our ministry. Stop all non-critical gatherings, essential workers only. Staff encouraged to work from home.

#### PROTOCOLS

- All individuals in the building or on church grounds will be masked, wash hands upon entering and exiting the building, stay 6-10 feet distanced from others, and will sanitize their work/meeting area before and after using.
- A high level of sanitation will be conducted, especially in high traffic areas.
- Detailed information regarding individuals in the building will be maintained by the Director of Facilities & Finance and the Office Manager, for use in contact tracing, should it be necessary.

#### BUILDING USERS

- The building is closed to visitors and church members.
- Office space is limited to no more than five people, three in outer office.
- Essential in-person meetings will utilize larger spaces (Commons, Room 7, Sanctuary).
- Masks will be provided based on availability. Masks may be removed when at own workspace, if not in close proximity to others.
- Anyone becoming ill should report their condition to the church office and go home immediately. All are encouraged to stay home if sick or if exposed to someone who is sick.
- Park with space between cars.
- No other rentals are allowed at this time. The Learning Garden at Hamline and Hamline Midway Elders are allowed to operate while following guidelines set forth by the State of Minnesota and the Center for Disease Control. Plans for operating during a pandemic, including their safety protocols, will be submitted.

#### WORSHIP

- Worship services are held online.

- Staff musicians, worship leaders and volunteer musicians may meet to record or live stream from the church sanctuary. Less than 10 people, following physical distancing and other MDH guidelines.
- Organ/piano recording may occur alone in the sanctuary.
- Members and attendees are invited to maintain contributions, on-line giving is encouraged.

### **Life Rituals**

- Weddings and funerals will be postponed or limited to recommendations from the State of Minnesota.
  - Organ, piano or pre-recorded music is allowed, but no singing.
  - Hymnals, bibles, and any other shared written material will not be used.
  - Single-use, non-shared bulletins may be used.
  - Traffic flow will be limited to one-way.
  - Use of fans will be discouraged, windows will be opened, weather permitting
  - Graveside memorial services are recommended.

### **LEADERSHIP MEETINGS & PROGRAMMING**

Church council, finance team, staff parish relations, trustees, ministry teams and other administrative/operational leadership teams:

- Gather online only.

### **SPIRITUAL FORMATION & SMALL GROUPS (Children, Youth & Adults)**

- Gather online only. Connect with members by phone and remotely. Deliver materials to homes.
  - No in-person Sunday School, VBS, or meetings, no Nursery or spaces that host children and youth should be accessed.

### **CHURCH BUILDING**

#### **Building Preparation for Eventual Return - custodial staff and volunteers**

- Inventory cleaning supplies – order as needed.
- Deep clean the entire church. Sanitize pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, water fountains, light switches, and microphones.
- Replace all HVAC filters and increase frequency of filter replacement.
- Shampoo carpets, update areas in need of TLC. Prepare all exterior, interior, and entryways for the return of the congregation, including new attendees.
- Regularly clean and sanitize spaces in use at this time: office, restrooms, etc.
- Provide access to sanitizing materials for building users.
- De-clutter nursery/children’s areas.
- Post signs about physical distancing, non-contact greetings throughout the building.
- Place hand-sanitizing stations throughout the building, including entrances/exits.
- Communicate these happenings to the congregation and community — share the preparations for the return of church services.
- For recommendations on cleaning specific surfaces, refer to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>

<b>Level 2: Yellow Light Status</b>
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## STATUS

This phase may cover the entire time before a vaccine is widely available or before we reach herd immunity (more research needed). Current estimates are in the 12-18-month range. Yellow light status accommodates gathering sizes between 10 and 100. When interpreting these protocols, consider two possible group size ranges 10-50, and 51-100. Church operations may transition in and out of this phase as dictated by the progression of the virus and mitigation efforts. As a congregation, we want to “Do Good” as restrictions are lifted. This means a gradual return to gatherings and doing so in a cautionary manner.

The shift from Level 3 to Level 2 will occur after re-evaluation. Throughout the year the church response team will be monitoring and gauging improving conditions across the city and state before a shift is made.

- *Safety and sanitation practices of Level 3 will be maintained when moving to Level 2.*

## PROTOCOLS

- All individuals in the building or on church grounds will be masked, wash hands upon entering and exiting the building, stay 6-10 feet distanced from others, and will sanitize their work/meeting area before and after using.
- A high level of sanitation will be conducted, especially in high-traffic areas.
- Detailed information regarding individuals in the building will be maintained by the Director of Facilities and Finance and the Office Manager, for use in contact tracing, should it be necessary.

## BUILDING USERS

- The building is open to activities and group sizes permissible by State guidelines.
- Staff may work from home, if able. Staff communicate schedules to ensure safety.
- Regular office functions resume.
- High-risk individuals practice sheltering in place (people over 60, those with underlying conditions or other vulnerabilities, those who have tested positive, and those who have been exposed to someone COVID-19 positive in the last 14 days). This includes staff, volunteers, parishioners and guests.
- Rentals resume in accordance with permissible group size maximums and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please direct any inquiries to Amy Perna.
- One person will serve as the “safety coordinator”, to prepare supplies needed and make sure safety protocols are followed by everyone.
- For all events held on site or offsite (church-sponsored), the “Event Checklist COVID 19” form must be completed, and the event should be registered with the church office staff.

## WORSHIP

**Note – below are TWO Scenarios for the Council’s consideration**

### 1. Online Worship Only

- Online worship continues, recording from home or in the Sanctuary with participation in small groups.
- No in-person services will be held until all can gather safely and in a manner that is better than online worship, as facemasks, distancing, no singing etc. may negatively impact the experiences of attendees. (Consider holding services if over 100 can gather.)

- Staff musicians *can* meet in person to rehearse, perform, and record musical material, including use of masks when feasible. All will be made aware of risks in working with vocalists. Instrumental (not wind) music will be used. More information is needed before live vocal music is pursued.
- A hybrid in-person/livestreamed service will be developed.

## 2. In Person Worship Resumes

- In person worship services may be held (multiple services, separate locations, or outdoors). A plan for managing the number per service and contingency plans for overflow should be in place. Worship staff and volunteers will maintain safe practices.
- Church leaders will be cognizant of the many who are high-risk and cannot attend in-person or may not feel safe to return even if precautions are in place.
- Ushers (with gloves and face masks) will properly seat attendees in marked pews and pass out bulletins. Traffic flow will be one-way (enter one way, exit another), directed by a point person.
- Offering communion safely will continue to be a challenge, (touching a face mask to remove it contaminates it and risks exposure). No contact protects the communion steward and the recipient. Consider participating in the Great Thanksgiving at end of service with gloved stewards placing individual cups and bread in recipient's open hands upon exiting. Or offer a blessing instead of bread.
- Volunteer Choir and Bell Ensemble will not rehearse or sing in person. There will be no singing/liturgical responses while the congregation is gathered. Singing and liturgical responses spread droplets/aerosols which carry the virus a significant distance and remain suspended in the air. A cloth mask is unlikely to provide enough protection.
- No-touch alternatives will be used for passing the peace, collecting offering, and liturgical resources. Pew Bibles, hymnals and materials will be removed. Bulletins or screens (preferred) will be used. Children's area materials will be removed.
- Children remain with families. Staff will engage children from a safe distance. No Nursery or spaces that host children and youth will be accessed.
- Windows in will be kept open, weather permitting. Use of fans is discouraged.
- Coffee hour will not be offered. People will be encouraged to leave rather than mingle.

### Life Rituals

- Life ritual services may be offered more traditional ways. Funerals, weddings, graduation, and confirmation gatherings should limit attendance in accordance with state guidelines and be brief.
- Offering baptisms safely will continue to be a challenge (touching a face mask to remove it contaminates it and risks exposure). No skin-to-skin contact is recommended.
- Weddings and funerals will be postponed or limited, depending on recommendations from the State of Minnesota.

## LEADERSHIP & PROGRAMMING

Church council, finance team, staff parish relations, trustees, ministry teams, programs, and other administrative/operational leadership teams:

- Meetings will continue on-line.

- When necessary, meetings might occur in person. Office Manager should be contacted to plan for room usage.

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION & SMALL GROUPS**

- Staff will experiment with 2-3 families meeting safely, and programming with small outside gatherings. Participants must rsvp.
  - In-person and online opportunities will be offered. Online options established during Level 3 will be maintained.
  - No shared food or drink.
  - Staff/volunteers will continue to contact members remotely. Lawn chair pastoral care or congregational care from Care Team will be explored.
- **CHILDREN & FAMILY**
    - There will be no Vacation Bible School (VBS), mission trips or lock-ins. All will keep in mind it is nearly impossible to keep children six feet apart and understand some parents will not feel safe until Level 1.
    - Online, mailed or no-touch drop-off activity for children and youth will be continued.
    - When childcare or Sunday School resumes, classrooms items will be pared down (those that can be safely sanitized).
    - Outdoor activities with clear spatial markings, weather permitting, could be considered.
    - Children’s Chorus activities resume as other children’s offerings are deemed safe. Live singing would need to be evaluated.

## **CHURCH BUILDING**

- Before and after each use, sanitize pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, water fountains, light switches, and microphones.
- Twice daily sanitize high traffic areas and high-touch items (railings, doorknobs, bathrooms).
- Remove all items from pews. Mark pews for physical distancing.
- Place containers for masks at entrances. Define procedures for handling dirty masks.
- Provide access to sanitizing materials for building users to wipe down meeting spaces.

## **Level 1: Green Light Status**

### **STATUS**

Green Light Status is the “Do No Harm” phase when the virus is contained, and our people are safe. Permission will be granted to communities of faith to return to full activity. This will be in place only as church leadership is confident in the care of their community of faith, guided by testing protocol for asymptomatic COVID-19 carriers, antibody testing, therapeutic drug therapies aggressively caring for those who have contracted COVID-19, and approval and availability of a COVID-19 vaccine.

- In shifting from **Level 2** to **Level 1**, the timeline will be guided by ongoing evaluation of the situation across the city and state.
- Moving between levels may be necessary, as the health situation varies.

## **PROTOCOLS**

- Masks may be worn by those wishing to do so, hand washing will be encouraged. Increased sanitization of work/meeting areas before and after using is encouraged.
- A thorough level of sanitation will be maintained, especially in high traffic areas.
- Information regarding individuals in the building will be maintained by the Director of Facilities and Finance and the Office Manager, for use in contact tracing, should it be necessary.

## **WORSHIP**

- Online streaming continues. In-person worship occurs with no restrictions on attendance.
- Regular practices, including singing, communion, hand-shaking and other practices involving close contact can be resumed.
- In person rehearsals and performances resume.
- Coffee hour may be resumed.
- Offer life ritual services in traditional ways.
- Be cognizant of those who may not feel safe to return even if the virus has been controlled.
- Maintain new practices that provide a better way of operating.

## **LEADERSHIP TEAMS & PROGRAMMING**

Church council, finance team, staff parish relations, trustees, ministry teams and other administrative/operational leadership teams:

- Normal operations may resume.

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND SMALL GROUPS (Children, Youth, & Adults)**

- Normal operations may resume. Offer in-person opportunities for Bible studies and small groups, VBS, mission trips and lock-ins.
- Continue spacing out participants, not using communal Bibles or other materials.
- When children and young people return to traditional classrooms begin slowly with pared down furniture and helping children with social distancing.

## **CHURCH BUILDING**

- Resume normal practices, maintaining high level of sanitation and cleaning.
- Take stock of cleaning supplies – order as needed.
- Provide access to sanitizing materials for building users to wipe down meeting spaces.