

North Raleigh United Methodist Church Regathering Stages

North Raleigh United Methodist Church is following a “go slow/go small” approach to regathering as the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic lessens over time. This approach is rooted in the call of scripture to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). Our approach is also consistent with the General Rule to “do no harm” as one of the hallmarks of our Wesleyan faith.

The approach outlined below is also guided by instructions and information from local and state public health authorities. However, this plan uses slightly different terminology (stages rather than phases) reflecting the unique nature of who the church is and what it does. Other entities may be able to reopen faster than the church can. Church gatherings, because so much of what we do requires close and sustained contact among persons, present a higher risk of infection than does a quick trip to the grocery store where generally contact with others is more casual.

This document is meant to be guide for North Raleigh in making the best decisions around regathering issues. Flexibility will be required to respond to circumstances as they are at any given time while at the same time ensuring we are fulfilling our vision to “glorify God and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by offering a safe and caring environment for anyone who is searching to be spiritually fulfilled and accepted.”

Stage Red

(Key Indicators—State and local infections increasing or plateauing)

- Other than very limited numbers of appropriately distanced staff and volunteers preparing the worship video, no in-person worship, Bible studies, small groups, choir rehearsals, Sunday school classes, or committee meetings held inside the building.
- Groups of 150 or less may meet outside of the church building provided they observe appropriate physical distancing and wear masks. The church playground remains closed, except for preschool use.
- Groups of 20 or less may meet in the main room of the Youth Building provided they observe appropriate physical distancing and wear masks. Groups meetings should be scheduled less than two hours apart (from the end of one meeting to the next).
- Holy Communion and Baptisms may be conducted following appropriate safety protocols.
- The church office is closed to members and the public. Staff members, exercising proper distancing and using masks when distancing is not possible, may work from the office at their discretion. Working from home is highly encouraged.
- Funerals and weddings attended by not more than 50 people may be held, or according to state guidelines.
- Pastoral care is done remotely using online means.
- North Raleigh Youth will may meet outside or inside church facilities following specific operational and safety protocols.
- The preschool, following internal safety protocols and procedures, may operate according to their school schedule.

Stage Orange

(Key Indicators—State and local infections decrease to 5 percent or less on a rolling 7 day average for at least a sustained two week period)

- Indoor worship may resume with attendance set at no more than 25% of maximum seating capacity (sanctuary and fellowship hall respectively). No congregational singing will be done but small numbers of singers and musicians may provide music for services. Those with speaking/singing roles in leading worship may remove

their masks when speaking or singing if vaccinated. All others should remain masked regardless of vaccination status.

- Groups of 150 or less may meet outside of the church building. Masks are optional for vaccinated persons who are outside church buildings. Persons not wearing masks should still be aware of their distance from others and use good judgment in congregating with others.
- Groups of 25 or less may meet in the main room of the Youth Building provided they observe appropriate physical distancing and wear masks. Groups meetings should be scheduled no less than two hours apart (from the end of one meeting to the next).
- Holy Communion and Baptisms may be conducted following appropriate safety protocols.
- The church office will remain closed to members and the public. Staff will still have the discretion to work from the office as well as have the opportunity to work from home as their job duties allow. Staff will be provided with proper safety protocols regarding physical distancing, sanitation, and masks.
- Funerals and wedding attended by not more than 100 people may be held. No food is allowed for receptions.
- Pastoral care is done remotely using online means.
- North Raleigh Youth will may meet outside or inside church facilities following specific operational and safety protocols.
- The preschool, following internal safety protocols and procedures, may operate according to their school schedule.

Stage Yellow

(Key Indicators—State and local infections decrease to 3 percent or less positivity rate based on a 7 day rolling average of tests for at least a two week sustained period)

- Indoor worship may resume with or without attendance limits. Mask requirements and distancing recommendations will be determined by local conditions and state and federal guidelines.
- Holy Communion and Baptisms may be conducted following appropriate safety protocols.
- Bible studies, small groups, and classes may meet inside the church buildings following local guidelines. Available rooms will be designated and capacity limits will be followed for each room.

- Adult music rehearsals may resume, though the numbers of participants will be limited by required physical distancing. Other precautions may also be employed.
- Small groups of musicians may provide worship music, with proper physical distancing and precautions.
- Church committees may meet in-person at the discretion of their chairs and based on room availability.
- There is no attendance restriction for outdoor events/gatherings and masks are optional outside church buildings for those who are vaccinated however appropriate safety protocols should be followed as announced by church leadership for specific events.
- The church office may open for church members and the public who will be admitted but at a pace limiting the numbers of persons inside the church office at any one time. Staff will be provided with proper safety protocols regarding physical distancing, sanitation, and masks.
- Funerals and wedding are permitted with no attendance limits. No food is allowed for receptions or other events inside church buildings.
- In-person pastoral care may resume provided safety protocols are followed. Pastoral care to the most vulnerable to complications from the virus should be done with the utmost caution and remotely if possible.
- North Raleigh Youth will may meet outside or inside church facilities following specific operational and safety protocols.
- The preschool, following internal safety protocols and procedures, may operate according to their school schedule.

Stage Green

(Key Indicators—A vaccine or clinically effective anti-viral treatments are widely available, infection rate is less than 1 percent or less, widespread testing is available, outbreaks contained)

- Normal operations and activities resume. Mask wearing and distancing may be recommended for vulnerable populations.

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As we regather, North Raleigh United Methodist should be governed by a culture of care and compassion for one another that is expressed in four key public health practices suggested by Dr. Atul Gawande of Harvard University as being key to reducing the spread of COVID-19:

1. Symptom Checks and Self-quarantine
2. Hand Hygiene
3. Masks or Face Coverings
4. Physical Distancing

These practices affirm our commitment to showing Christian love and care to others as well building a grace-filled community.