

Dear Manchester Youth families,

Fall is quickly approaching, and I am finalizing plans for Manchester Youth programming. We will continue to operate under the guidelines of the [Pandemic Plan for Ministry](#) for Manchester UMC, which means Youth programming will look different depending on which phase we are in. This letter provides an overview so you as parents and guardians can be informed about what to expect in each phase. More details will be provided as we approach programming start dates or when we change phases.

While we have learned a lot so far about what works and what doesn't regarding youth programming in a pandemic, we are still learning as we go, and we are doing our best to think through every scenario and make/communicate plans. If you notice an issue in the plan or have a suggestion for improving the plan, please communicate your concerns with grace and gentleness. Keeping youth safe has always been the first priority of everything we do, and it continues to be our first priority. If we don't think we can do something safely, we won't do it. After addressing safety, we want to continue to provide programming that is accessible, relevant, and meaningful to our youth, while keeping them connected to each other and to God.

As you review the charts below, you may have some questions. Here are the answers to some questions I am anticipating.

Q: Why are Zoom meetings at 7:00 pm and one hour long?

A: Zoom meetings are one hour because youth quickly tire of staring at screens, and they take place at 7:00 pm so that Youth Group does not interrupt family outings or dinner.

Q: Why are parking lot meetings (phase 2) from 6:30 – 8:00 pm?

A: We are meeting in the evening to avoid the hottest part of the day, and we are meeting for 1.5 hours to allow enough time to watch a virtual message, discussion time, and game time. If we are in Phase 2 as the weather turns colder, we will shift meetings to 4:00 – 5:30 pm.

Q: What if there is inclement weather during Phase 2?

A: If there is mild rain forecasted, we will still meet outside but underneath pavilions. If severe weather is predicted, we will meet instead via Zoom at the scheduled time.

Q: Why is Youth Band, Tech Team, and Gods Gamer's canceled in Phase 2?

A: None of these have content that are conducive to outside meetings or Zoom.

Q: Why aren't you requiring masks in Phase 2?

A: We believe that being outside, six feet apart, and no shared supplies will be enough to keep everyone protected. When we are six feet apart and outside, it's extremely hard to hear anyone behind a mask. However, any youth who opts to wear a mask is welcome to do so.

Q: What is the bathroom protocol in Phase 2?

A: Youth will have to complete the church's [health screening form](#) before they enter the building. Once they enter, they must wear a mask, use hand sanitizer, use the designated single stall restrooms, and follow the sanitizing instructions. Only one youth will be allowed in the building at a time.

Q: Why are Phase 3 meetings from 4:00 – 5:30 pm?

A: We will not be able to meet for free play game time or Worship due to social distancing rules. Youth Group will consist of small groups and 1.5 hours allows enough time to watch a virtual message, discussion time, and game time.

Q: Why would some special events be canceled (rather than modified) in Phase 3?

A: Phase 3 requires social distancing. Most of our special events require traveling, and we do not have enough vehicles or drivers to transport youth distanced six feet apart. Also, youth are, as a general rule, bad at distancing themselves, and some events are not conducive to managing and enforcing this rule.

Q: How will you manage supplies in Phases 2 and 3?

A: Chairs will be set up in advance by Beth or a crew. Supplies will be assembled by Felicia or Beth in advance, and those supplies will be left in bags on chairs. Anyone who touches chairs or supplies will be masked and wearing gloves during set-up. After use, chairs and supplies will be thoroughly sanitized before use again OR will be set aside for at least 4 days. Youth will be encouraged to bring their OWN Bibles. Any Bibles provided will be set aside and not used again for at least two weeks.

Q: Can you guarantee that youth will never be within 6 feet of each other?

A: Unfortunately, guarantees are not possible, but our rule is six feet, and we will do everything possible to maintain social distance. If someone breaks the six-foot rule, they will be told to back up. If they break it again, parents will be called.

Q: I'm not comfortable sending my youth to any in-person activities yet. Are there other options available?

A: Yes! With advance notice, we can make plans to set up a computer on a chair and Zoom them into the conversation. Please contact Beth if you want to utilize this option.

Q: Last Spring you changed the curriculum to speak to the issues around the pandemic. What will the curriculum look like this fall?

A: We will resume the planned 3-year curriculum. This fall begins Year 3. When Scripture and theology is studied well, youth will find it directly relevant to their lives, and I believe this will continue be the case even as we face this unprecedented pandemic.

Please review the following charts to get an overview of what youth programming will look like in each phase. At the present time, we are in Phase 2. If we move phases, Manchester UMC leadership will likely give us some advance notice, and then I will follow suit with how that affects youth programming. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at beth.boemler@manchesterumc.org.

Yours in Christ,

Beth

Phase 1

Program	Venue	Day	Time	Additional Precautions
Youth Group	Zoom	Sundays	7:00 – 8:00 pm	n/a
Middle School Meet-Up	Zoom	Wednesdays	6:30 – 7:30 pm	n/a
Confirmation	Zoom	As scheduled	As scheduled	n/a
Leadership Teams	Zoom	Mondays	4:00 or 5:00 pm	n/a
Youth Band	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tech Team	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
God's Gamers	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
Special Events	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a

Phase 2

Program	Venue	Day	Time	Additional Precautions
Youth Group	Parking Lot	Sundays	6:30 – 8:00 pm	Social distancing, no shared materials
Middle School Meet-Up	Parking Lot	Wednesdays	6:15 – 7:30 pm	Social distancing, no shared materials
Confirmation	Parking Lot	As scheduled	As scheduled	Social distancing, no shared materials
Leadership Teams	Zoom	Tuesdays	4:00 or 5:00 pm	Social distancing, no shared materials
Youth Band	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tech Team	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
God's Gamers	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
Special Events	Modified or canceled	As scheduled	As scheduled	Social distancing, no shared materials

Phase 3

Program	Venue	Day	Time	Additional Precautions
Youth Group	Church, large rooms	Sundays	4:00 – 5:30 pm	Masks, social distancing, health screening, no shared materials
Middle School Meet-Up	Church, Youth Center	Wednesdays	6:15 – 7:30 pm	Masks, social distancing, health screening, no shared materials
Confirmation	Church, large rooms	As scheduled	As scheduled	Masks, social distancing, health screening, no shared materials
Leadership Teams	Church, large rooms	Mondays	4:00 or 5:00 pm	Masks, social distancing, health screening, no shared materials
Youth Band	Church, Youth Center	n/a	n/a	Social distancing, masks for non-singers, health screening, no shared materials
Tech Team	Church, Youth Center	n/a	n/a	Masks, social distancing, health screening, no shared materials
God's Gamers	Canceled	n/a	n/a	n/a
Special Events	Modified or canceled	As scheduled	As scheduled	Masks, social distancing, health screening, no shared materials

Phase 4

Program	Venue	Day	Time	Additional Precautions
Youth Group	Youth Center, various rooms	Sundays	4:00 – 6:00 pm	Hand sanitizer breaks, regular cleaning of supplies
Middle School Meet-Up	Youth Center	Wednesdays	6:15 – 7:30 pm	Hand sanitizer breaks, regular cleaning of supplies
Confirmation	Youth Center, various rooms	As scheduled	As scheduled	Hand sanitizer breaks, regular cleaning of supplies
Leadership Teams	Youth Center	Sundays, Tuesdays	(Sun) 6:15-7:15 pm (Tues) 6-7 pm and 7-8 pm	Hand sanitizer breaks
Youth Band	Youth Center	Sundays	3:00-4:00 pm	none
Tech Team	Youth Center	Sundays	3:00-4:00 pm	Regular cleaning of supplies
God's Gamers	Youth Center	Thursdays	6:00-7:30 pm	Hand sanitizer breaks, regular cleaning of supplies
Special Events	As scheduled	As scheduled	As scheduled	Hand sanitizer breaks, regular cleaning of supplies