

11-14-2021

From: DUUC Covid Task Force

To: Board of Trustees

## Recommendation to return to in-person worship

When it became time to create a plan to reopen church, we first determined our guiding principles. Below are the principles that we believe are in line with the seven Unitarian Universalist principles and allow us to walk our talk.

### **Our general principles:**

- Inclusivity and justice: We will not exclude people and will take special care that equity and anti-oppression are centered in our decision making.
- Safety: We will do our utmost to keep our people and the community safe. We will not contribute to community spread.
- Community matters: We value our community and being together. As soon as it is safe to gather in an inclusive way, we will.
- Pro-science: We support vaccination and the wearing of masks by those who are able as a scientific, reasonable, and loving decision. You protect yourself and others. We believe that vaccines are effective and trust the scientists who have worked on them.

We pledge that we will be transparent, responsive, and deliberate about how we go about this. Our public health officials have said that as we begin to have some in-person offerings, we have to be prepared to shift back to all virtual if conditions change. But in the same vein we will “Go slow and be flexible” as we lift restrictions.

### **Criteria for In-Person Church:**

The UUA has suggested churches to monitor live data regarding covid cases but has not given guidance on how to use the numbers. We do know that we are currently in the third highest surge of cases since the pandemic began and we are currently beginning to spike in cases and hospitalizations as we head into the winter holidays. We feel that the categories given over the summer by the CDC and Act Now are less relevant in determining “safeness” of in-person church.

We are also aware that the number of cases has become less meaningful over time due to:  
The politics of vaccination rates (we are among the highest)  
Our area’s relatively high testing rate of asymptomatic individuals

Our area has a considerably higher number of insured individuals and hospital beds than some areas.

In addition, many health experts are now saying that we are entering a post-pandemic phase, where the Covid virus will become endemic.

Now with vaccines available for children between ages five and twelve we also feel that once there is time given for full vaccination we'll have a safer environment. By the new year, those who wish to have their children vaccinated should have had access to both shots.

Our recommendation is based on a need to give our staff/task force time to organize volunteers, hold the necessary training, and give any post holiday infections time to subside.

We would suggest starting in person services January 9th. This date allows Connie to be present for our first in-person service, time for the YRE committee to plan for any changes to their program, and volunteers to be organized.

### **Masks:**

We will require all people to wear masks. Data from DuPage and area counties will be used as a guide to determine when we are nearing "population immunity" at which time masks will be voluntary.

Staff may remove their masks when working in their own office, and service leaders will remove their masks when speaking with adequate distance.

After we reach the vaccination threshold, people who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, or because they are children for whom the vaccine is not yet approved, should continue to wear masks. Other people are more than welcome, though not required, to wear masks, whether they've been vaccinated or not. People with any COVID or flu-like symptoms should worship online, and not in person. We may adjust these requirements based on CDC and IDPH guidance. Vaccination data will be collected from the Illinois Department of Health (i.e. <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccinedata?county=DuPage>).

### **Youth Religious Education (In progress):**

Vaccines are required for volunteers who work with children. Due to limited classroom size all cohorts (PreK - 6th grade, 7th & 8th, and 9th - 12th grades) will meet outdoors, weather permitting, or in large meeting spaces (Kreves, Founders & Learning Center) for age appropriate multi-platform lessons.

### **Proof of vaccination:**

As a community that values inclusion and collective care, we don't want to create in-person situations that inadvertently exclude those at higher risk, or create situations that force those

at higher risk to publicly identify themselves. Our decision-making must center the needs of the most vulnerable.

We will only require proof of vaccination for RE volunteers. Volunteer greeters and stewards should be vaccinated, but that, and our encouragement for everyone who is able to be vaccinated, is on the honor system. We do not feel it appropriate for the church to ask or keep track of this information. However, if we find that we have a large number of unvaccinated people whose choice to not get a vaccine puts those who cannot get one for medical reasons at risk, we will reevaluate this. The Board and staff agree that you can be trusted to get your vaccine – please do so.

### **Special Music and Song:**

Music with wind instruments and performed songs will be pre-recorded and played back during the service.

### **Hymn Singing:**

Knowing that not everyone in our congregations (or who might visit) will get vaccinated against COVID-19, we must rely on other safety measures to control the level of respiratory droplets that could be shared in group singing. Experts consulted by the UUA advise that the simultaneous presence of any three out of these four factors creates an adequately safe environment for singing during the pandemic:

- **Excellent ventilation:** you are singing outdoors, or you are singing indoors in a space with excellent ventilation (20 liters/min/person or >5 ACH.)
- **High quality masks:** High-filtering, low-leak masks (such as KN95) or well-fitting double masks worn by all participants.
- **Distance** of at least six feet between participants who are not in the same household.
- **Duration** of no more than 30 minutes.

Return to in-person worship will begin without communal singing. Humming or mouthing the words will be encouraged. However, using our guiding principle of “go slow and be flexible”, the Music Committee is being consulted regarding our next steps.

### **Coffee Hour:**

Our intention is to flow people into and out of the church building without congregating inside. We will encourage members and friends to socialize outside if the weather permits. A large tent has been installed in the backyard for protection from sun, rain and snow. Sidewalks and the back patio provide space for those who are less mobile. Food and beverages will not be provided. (Insert asking individuals to leave the building within 15 minutes of service ending).

**Greeters:**

The Greeter's duty, beyond their original job description, will be to control the flow of people into the church building and directing them to the sanctuary. Greeters will organize and place name tags on tables leading from the entryway to the sanctuary. Greeters will provide facemasks to congregants as needed. A training session for greeters will be provided.

**Stewards:**

Stewards will seat congregants as households in an efficient manner so that we can utilize as much seating as possible. Every other row will be closed and there should be three empty chairs between households. Offerings will be encouraged to still take place online however collection baskets will be placed to allow giving on the way in or out of the sanctuary. After the service the stewards will dismiss congregants one row at a time. A training session for stewards will be provided.

**Overflow (In progress):**

If the sanctuary fills to capacity (about 50%) the stewards and greeters will offer and redirect congregants to overflow seating in Kreves Hall and/or the Learning Center for remote viewing. During the winter months there is no viable plan for overflow because the large rooms of the church will be occupied for youth religious education. If this is the case we will need to start taking reservations to attend. Church staff will need to determine the best software to fit our needs.

**Meetings:**

Church meetings should be multi-platform if meeting in-person, meaning that individuals can choose to join via Zoom or in person. Technology has been upgraded in many of the meeting rooms and we will continue to work towards improving this technology. .

Room occupancy will be based on room size and ability to safely distance. These numbers are based on non-related adults in the room. Once the group is seated they can choose as a group whether to stay masked during the meeting.

Founders Room: 14

Learning Center: 28

Kreves Hall: 20

Sanctuary: 25

Whitney Young: 4

Clara Barton: 6

The following Group Expectations and Guidelines will be posted in meeting spaces and sent to group leaders:

- For the safety of your group, other groups and church staff please enforce our safety measures within your groups.
- Please ask members of your group to refrain from attending if they show signs of illness (coughing, fever, sore throat).
- Arrive no sooner than five minutes early and leave no later than five minutes after scheduled ending time.
- No community food or drinks to share.
- Wear a facemask while traveling through building.
- If seated and socially distanced facemask may be removed if all parties are agreeable.
- Individual impromptu meetings can take place on benches in the backyard.

We do encourage individuals or families to visit the church property and enjoy our prairie, gardens and labyrinth at any time (no reservation required).

If small groups would like to meet in the backyard for a social gathering or meeting, it should be scheduled through [calendar@dupageuuchurch.org](mailto:calendar@dupageuuchurch.org) to avoid conflicts.