

# **UUCWC Reopening Guidelines (Updated September 25, 2021)**

The impact of the Delta variant's higher transmissibility has impacted reopening plans at UUCWC. We continue to track COVID levels in our communities using the conservative risk ratings/metrics as published by the NY Times and recommended by the Reopening Task Force. As the risk level as of September 25, 2021 remains Very High, the church building is closed for regular use. Outside guidelines have been updated using UUA and CDC guidance. For more detail, please review the Reopening Guidelines for Very High Risk, currently in place.

*These guidelines, created by the Staff, and affirmed by the Board of Trustees, are created with unending appreciation for the work of the UUCWC Reopening Team.*

## **Reopening Overview**

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## **Reopening Overview/Summary**

The UUCWC Staff and Board of Trustees continues to recommend a gradual process of resuming in-person activities guided by information about the risk of COVID-19 infection in the communities surrounding UUCWC. Generally, smaller, non-public events will resume in-person first. Large, public gatherings will resume last. Outdoor events which are less risky will be offered as possible when risk levels are Very High to Extremely High; indoor events will be considered when risk levels are High, Moderate or Low.

**Masks will be required** for indoor use **regardless of vaccination status** per current CDC guidelines.

If the metrics indicate risk level is Very High or Extremely High, worship will be virtual and the church building will be closed; outdoor in-person worship may be offered, weather permitting and with precautions, in tandem with virtual worship. {If the metrics indicate risk level is Low, Moderate or, with discretion and added precautions, High, **in-person worship** service may be held in the Sanctuary on Sundays. The specific logistics for the service will involve some occupancy restrictions and other precautions.} Virtual live worship will always be available.

Currently **Faith Engagement classes for children** remain on hold; children are welcomed into virtual service as well as virtual Family Chapels, which will be held twice monthly starting Oct. 3. Outdoor programming for our tweens and teens will also be offered, weather permitting.

**Choir** may meet outside, wearing well-fitting masks and be distanced 6'ft with proof of vaccination; those whose vaccination status is unknown or have not been vaccinated should distance 10-12 ft per current UUA guidelines on singing. At this time, congregational singing is not recommended.

Small group (fewer than 15 people) events may be held outside using UUA Covenantal Consent guidelines for masking and distancing. Medium sized group (16-25 people) events may be held outdoors with participants masked and distanced per current outdoor guidelines.

## **Guiding Principles**

**Theology:** As Unitarian Universalists, a celebratory diverse body, one way we practice our faith is by expressing solidarity for all who are still threatened physically and psychologically by COVID-19.

We take seriously the long and cruel history of systemic racism in our country, that was often expressed through medicine, and specifically in vaccines. We seek to protect those of our children who cannot yet receive a vaccination, as well as the immuno-compromised, transplant recipients and many cancer survivors who cannot be vaccinated. We acknowledge the enormous inequities and lack of access in communities and work forces that have made vaccination difficult or impossible. We also recognize that isolation is a public health concern and is detrimental to some members of our congregation.

Called to a life of humility and wonder, we acknowledge that this document must always be considered and revised depending on the science and circumstances.

**Safety:** At a minimum, UUCWC will follow all restrictions and guidelines from government authorities. The approach to understanding the risk of COVID-19 transmission is based in science. The current scientific consensus is that the primary risk of contracting COVID-19 is from airborne transmission of the virus, not from surfaces. Masks do help prevent transmission. The risk of transmission outdoors is low. Risk of transmission indoors is higher. Crowded spaces indoors with poor ventilation are at highest risk. Singing or yelling are higher risk activities.

**Metrics:** As researched by the Reopening Team, and for consistency, we will use the **NY Times Metrics - number of cases per 100,000 for a 7-day average** - prioritizing the higher risk county within which most of our congregation resides: Bucks, PA, or Mercer, NJ. **Weekly metrics and their impact on use of the building and grounds will be reported in the Weekly email.**

<b>Low: less than 1 per 100,000</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Moderate: 2 per 100,000</b>	<b>Open with some restrictions</b>
<b>High: 3-10 per 100,000</b>	<b>Open with more extreme caution</b>
<b>Very High: 11-44 per 100,000</b>	<b>Building Closed: Grounds Open With Precautions/Limits</b>
<b>Extremely High: 45+ per 100,000</b>	<b>Grounds &amp; Building Closed</b>

**Covenant:** The following ground rules\* will guide the regathering process:

In gathering together, we promise to:

- Gain consent before touching / hugging others.
- Wear masks inside the building until vaccines are available to all children.
- Find ways to be inclusive of adults who cannot be vaccinated.
- Give and accept reminders of these ground rules gracefully.
- Take seriously the obligation to think about the safety of the whole before our own sense of what is safe for ourselves.

- Assume good intentions, but also accept that policies and these ground rules will guide our actions.
- Respect the authority of the people making policies.
- Not attend in-person gatherings if we are not feeling well, or have been exposed to COVID-19.

*\* developed by Carol Gay, UU Congregation of Cleveland*

**UUCWC adds this:** One should not assume the vaccination status of any member of our community.

### **Overall Principles for Regathering**

Because we are a community of care, we encourage everyone to regather gently, thoughtfully and incrementally.

1. Start with the easy gatherings
  - Non-public before public events
  - Small before large events
2. Move slowly
  - Start small, announce tentative schedule for bigger events
3. Communicate clearly
  - Clearly communicate expectations and restrictions early and often
4. Evaluate often
  - After action – how did the event go? Did any situation arise that was unexpected? Should our approach be adjusted for that type of event?
5. Look ahead
  - Watch the health metrics
  - Prepare ahead of time to scale back events as health conditions indicate

### **Procedures & Protocols for Events**

- All events should have a designated leader who will assume responsibility for health and safety protocols. Coordinators maintain contact information for all participants of non-public events. Coordinators will be asked to provide brief feedback after the event – # of attendees, protocols used, whether everyone felt comfortable, anything they would do differently next time. Coordinator information will be provided when reserving space.
- Minimum requirements of indoor events (when available): masks and 6' of social distancing, based on rated occupancy per room.
- When possible, events provide a streaming option for those who are unable to attend in person.

- Special events will be treated on a case-by-case basis, considering the above guidelines.
- Public events, regardless of size, must assume attendance by, and provide for, vulnerable persons and implement appropriate protocols (masks, social distancing, and limited capacity to allow for distancing).
- Staff and Board of Trustees will review these guidelines monthly and will update/ make adjustments as needed.

**When Risk is at Very High, the church building will remain closed to all except essential personnel. Outdoor guidelines for Very High Risk are:**

1. Leaders of groups using the grounds are responsible for maintaining a list of attendees in case contact tracing is needed; notify the office if you plan to use the grounds.
2. When Risk levels are Very High, masking and distancing of 6 ft. should be practiced for groups of 15 or more. For groups of 15 or less, practice Covenantal Consent regarding Inclusion, Care, and Consent while on church grounds. Individuals may opt to continue masking if desired.
3. Do not visit the church grounds if you are feeling ill or have had contact with a person with COVID-19.
4. Leaders of groups using the grounds that have a key to the church may allow access to the lower level restrooms through the Crossings Room, with group members using restrooms one at a time. Leaders are required to be sure the church is locked and lights are off before departing. If restrooms are used, please let the office know so additional cleaning protocols can occur.
5. Take all trash with you as trash pick-up at the church is suspended.

## **FAQs – UUCWC Regathering Plan**

### **When will we worship in the Sanctuary again?**

When the risk is Low, Moderate or High (as defined by the *New York Times* COVID tracker) in-person worship will be held in the Sanctuary on Sundays. If the risk level is High there will be additional precautions put in place; when risk levels are Very High or Extremely High, worship will be virtual only. The specific logistics for in-person worship when risk levels are High will involve some occupancy restrictions and safety precautions.

### **Will we have to wear masks?**

Yes. To be inclusive of members of the community of all ages, we will wear masks until vaccinations are available to all.

### **What about the kids?**

Children are always welcomed at virtual services. Beginning this fall, Children's Chapels will be offered as well. As vaccinations for children of all ages over 2 continue to be developed, distributed and administered, our guidelines will be adjusted.

### **What about singing?**

According to UUA guidelines, there should be no congregational singing at this time. The Choir may sing outside, masked and distanced at least 6 ft with proof of vaccination; unvaccinated individuals should maintain a 10-12 ft distance.

### **What about outdoor services?**

This fall, we will be offering several opportunities to gather for worship outdoors, weather permitting. These will be in tandem with virtual worship, which will always be available. Masking and distancing may be required as well as signing up in advance; look for information in weekly emails.

### **Will I still be able to attend remotely? If yes, for which activities?**

Worship services will always be accessible remotely. Our goal going forward is to make as many other activities as possible accessible through a multi-platform approach, as risk levels permit. Organizers will make decisions for private events.

### **How will it be determined when we can return to in-person activities indoors, and who will decide?**

The risk level will be assessed weekly using available metrics. The UUCWC Staff, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, will monthly decide which planned activities may go forward, based on that risk level.