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Regathering Update 11.11.21

Given that there is now a vaccine available for children aged 5-11 years old; and

Given that the latest [UUA recommendations from Oct. 21, 2021](#) suggest congregations use [COVID Act Now](#) as a resource for metrics; and

Given a change from looking at Bucks County and Mercer County metrics and drawing on the risk level of the higher of the two to guide our church's reopening status, instead using the lower of the two risk levels; and

Given that transmission is likely to rise after Thanksgiving and the winter holidays; and

Given that the staff and lay leadership needs time to prepare responsibly for in-person events;

UUCWC will reopen for one service on December 19th, at least two services in January including the 9th and 23rd, and resume an ongoing schedule of multi-platform congregational life beginning February 6, 2022; small group activities may resume November 29, 2021 (risk level dependent).

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.

If the metrics indicate risk level is Very High or Extremely High, worship will be virtual and the church building will be closed. 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.

Process for Resuming In-Person Activities on Sundays *while risk is at High*

Vaccination: We are a covenantal community bound by the sacred promises we make and keep. To attend in-person services, vaccination, for those who are eligible, is expected.

Masks: Masks indoors will be required for those over the age of 2 regardless of vaccination status per current CDC guidelines.

Distancing: When worship will be held in-person in addition to online (a predetermined limited schedule for Dec-Jan, and regularly from February onwards, risk level dependent), Sanctuary seating will be limited to 100 people, or $\frac{1}{3}$ of our seating capacity, to allow for physical distancing indoors; attendees will be responsible for distancing themselves. (Reference note: two chairs is the equivalent of 3 feet.)

When possible, overflow will be welcomed into the Crossings Room for communal remote worship; this space can hold 30 seats, roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ the room's capacity, for viewing of the service via projection of streamed services.

Attending services: SignUp Genius will be used for reserving a seat at Sunday in-person worship on a first come, first served basis; the SignUp will be available at least 6 days in advance of the service. Consideration for future seating will be given to those who could not sign up after the limit has been reached. Five spaces will be held for unanticipated, vaccinated visitors, who will be asked to show proof of vaccination.

All attendees to in-person worship will remain fully masked while in the building. While there will be no singing other than the musicians (wearing special singers masks), humming along behind masks is encouraged.

Restrooms: Restrooms will be available as one-at-a-time use.

Fellowship Hour: Fellowship Hour is suspended while rates are High.

Congregating Before and After Sunday Service: In-person attendees will be encouraged to take a seat in the Sanctuary upon arrival and to exit the building at the end of the service. Socializing is encouraged outside as weather permits.

Hosts: Given that socializing must be held outside; and given that order of services will be virtual, two Lay Hosts (previously Ushers and Greeters), in addition to Rev. Kim Wildszewski and Faith Engagement Director Robin Pugh, will be responsible for greeting and directing folks to the Sanctuary or Crossings Room per reservations from SignUp Genius. The Lay Hosts will also count money from the Financial Affirmation and put the bank bag in the lock box. They will set out a desk with sign-in information, disposable masks, hand sanitizer, Connection Cards, and traffic light lanyards (red, yellow and green name-tag lanyards that visually communicate an individual's comfort with physical interaction).

Choir: Choir may rehearse and record inside. When at worship services, choir members will be masked and distanced from the congregation. At this time, congregational singing is not recommended, but humming is encouraged.

Children's Faith Engagement: Information regarding the Children and Youth Faith Engagement programs will be shared by December 1st. Until then, children are welcomed into virtual service as well as virtual Family Chapels, which will be held twice monthly on the first and third Sundays of the month. Outdoor programming for our tweens and teens is also offered, weather permitting.

Process for Resuming In-Person Activities other than Sundays **while risk is at High**

Scheduling and Room use: For maximum air circulation and distancing, only the largest rooms will be made available. For groups of 5-12 people, available rooms include: Sanctuary, Crossings Room, Rooms 201 and 202. For groups smaller than 5, rooms 203 and 103 may also be made available. Attendees should remain masked and distanced while indoors and restrooms are available with one-at-a time usage. *Room reservations must be made through the office; no impromptu meetings.*

Leaders: All events should have a designated leader who will assume responsibility for health and safety protocols. Leaders will maintain attendance for all non-public events and meetings to facilitate contact tracing if needed.

Attendance Options: When possible, leaders of meetings/events will provide a streaming option for those who are unable to attend in person. 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).

Special events will be treated on a case-by-case basis, considering the above 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 strive to 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: [COVID ACT NOW](#) has been recommended by the UUA as a source for metrics. This source considers daily new cases per 100,000 (as reported by the NY Times), infection rates, positive test rates and vaccination percentages by county. COVID ACT NOW lists risk level as High as of 11.11.21.

Covenant: The following ground rules (adapted from Carol Gay, UU Congregation of Cleveland) will guide the regathering process.

In gathering together, we promise to:

- Gain consent before touching / hugging others.
- Wear masks inside the building.
- Find ways to be inclusive of adults and children 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.

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

Staff and Board of Trustees will review these guidelines monthly and will update/ make adjustments as needed.