

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines

Guide for Meetings and Events

Re-opening after COVID closing

Introduction

This document describes the general approach to be taken by the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific procedures applicable to each level of opening are covered in separate sections of this document. The church recommends that all persons participating in church activities become familiar with and follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Information is available at www.cdc.gov and at www.UUA.org .

The Board of Trustees has adopted these requirements and procedures to minimize possible exposure to the Covid-19 virus and to reduce the risk of members contracting the disease while participating in church activities. These procedures should not be construed as a guarantee that no exposure will take place. Individuals that meet the CDC definition of “at risk”, or that consider themselves to be at a high risk of experiencing severe symptoms if the disease is contracted are encouraged to stay home and stay safe. The CDC defines the “at-risk population” as those who are 65 or older, especially those with chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, chronic heart disease, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, liver disease, or a weakened immune system. Each individual must evaluate the risks of exposure when participating in activities (church or otherwise) against the benefits derived from the participation, and act accordingly. The church will make a concerted effort to provide opportunities for participation in all group activities by persons not comfortable with meeting in-person

Requests for building access or to plan activities not covered by these procedures should be addressed to Rev. Amy Shaw, the President of the Board of Trustees, and the co-chairs of the Lens of the Future Committee. Rev. Shaw and the Lens of the Future Committee will provide their recommendation to the Board for action on the request. The Board will act on the request in a timely manner, and Rev. Shaw will notify the requesting party of the Board’s decision.

The original issuance of these procedures were written prior to the development and subsequent roll out of effective COVID 19 vaccines. Today COVID 19 vaccines are readily available to all persons age 12 and older. These procedures have been updated to reflect vaccine availability and the recently updated guidelines issued by the CDC.

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We are aware that there may be members unable to be vaccinated due to medical issues and that no vaccine at this time has been approved for youth under the age of 12. Hybrid activities that provide both virtual and in person participation are encouraged to ensure that these members and youth will be able to participate in church activities. We assume that all others have been vaccinated or are taking the appropriate protective measures.

Anyone that has reason to believe they might be infected should seek appropriate medical care, stay home, and not attend any gathering or event. Anyone with a confirmed case should follow CDC guidelines [[link to CDC](#)] and medical advice.

Definitions – the following terms are defined for purposes of these procedures.

Pod – A group of twelve (12) or fewer persons that are either 1) from a single household, or 2) are all fully vaccinated and have mutually agreed to become members of the pod. Persons in a pod that are not from a single household should not have any unvaccinated household members who are at increased risk of complications if infected with COVID-19.

Fully Vaccinated – Persons are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the second dose of a 2-dose series or two weeks after receiving a single-dose vaccine.

Procedures and Descriptions of Levels of Opening

Each meeting or gathering must have an assigned facilitator. The facilitator is responsible for sharing a copy of the guidelines and procedures prior to the gathering, assisting participants in following the procedures, and maintaining a log of all persons attending. The facilitator will also read the Covid Covenant statement at the beginning of the meeting. The identity of participants will be recorded by the facilitator, including a current email address, phone number, or other contact information. This record will be used to contact people in the event that an attendee becomes ill within 7 days of the gathering.

If any person that has participated in any church related gathering in the past two weeks is confirmed to have an active case of COVID-19, meetings of all groups that had potential contact with that person will be suspended for 2 weeks, and all persons who had participated in those groups will be notified of the potential exposure. The church will maintain full confidentiality of the person who tested positive.

The Lens of the Future Committee will monitor the prevalence of disease in the community using defined criteria, and will recommend to the Board when movement between levels is appropriate. The re-opening status, as approved by the Board, will be

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communicated to the congregation via Intercom, website and/or Sunday service, with special emphasis to provide clear notification of changes to the status of meeting restrictions.

The following procedures are applicable during each Level of re-opening.

Level 0

No church sponsored in-person meetings allowed, regardless of the number of people attending or the location of the meeting.

The following procedures apply to activities while at Level 0.

1. In-person meetings and gatherings are not allowed, except as specifically authorized by the Board.
2. The church building is closed for all access and uses, except as follows:
 - a. Staff are encouraged to work from home, but are allowed to come into the building at their discretion.
 - b. Limited access for specific tasks such as maintenance and cleaning.
 - c. Specific activities authorized by the Board, with defined restrictions on number of people, building area to be used, cleaning, etc.
 - d. Care must be taken to maintain physical distance if staff or maintenance or cleaning personnel are in the building while another authorized activity is in progress.
3. Individuals or family groups may use the church grounds.

Level 1

The church building remains closed except for specific activities authorized by the Board. Groups are allowed to meet in person in outdoor settings.

The following procedures apply to activities at Level 1:

1. Small groups are allowed to gather for in-person activities at their own risk, either on the church grounds or in other public or private spaces, subject to the following restrictions.
 - a. All gatherings must be held outdoors in the open air.
 - b. No more than 10 people may assemble at any one time.
 - c. No communal singing or chanting is allowed.
 - d. Minimize contact with common surfaces; no shared open containers of food or beverages, talking pieces, other materials, or handouts are allowed.
 - e. Facial coverings are required only if there is extended close contact between participants (less than an arm's length separation from other persons not in your pod).

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- f. Participants may bring food and beverages for their own use or for sharing. Food preparation, handling, transporting, distribution, and serving must follow strict health and safety procedures. Used containers, dishes, and utensils must be collected in a closed plastic bag (or similar container) for removal from the site.
 - g. The facilitator will assemble a list of all attendees with phone numbers or emails and report to the Director of Faith Formation within 24 hours of meeting completion. Group members must be encouraged to report any illness to the Senior Minister if they fall ill within a week of the group meeting.
 - h. Any use of church grounds for group activities must be scheduled through the normal church calendar procedures. Scheduling requests should be emailed to communications@ucdsm.org.
2. The church building is closed for all access and uses, except as follows.
- a. Staff are encouraged to work from home, but are allowed to come into the building at their discretion.
 - b. Limited access for specific tasks such as maintenance and cleaning.
 - c. Specific activities authorized by the board, with defined restrictions on number of people, building area to be used, cleaning, etc.
 - d. Groups meeting on the church grounds may access the building with the following restrictions.
 - (1) Building access for set-up activities is limited to 1 person at any one time. Bathroom or lift use is also limited to 1 person at a time, unless caregiver assistance is needed.
 - (2) Use of the kitchen is not allowed.
 - (3) No group meetings or gatherings are allowed in the building.
 - (4) The lift may be used to provide access to the patio area from the upper parking lots.
 - (5) Events held on the patio or adjacent areas will be limited to using the bathrooms on the lower level. Events held on the north or west side of the building, or in the upper parking lot will be limited to using the bathrooms on the upper level.
 - (6) Cleaning supplies, such as sanitizing wipes, alcohol spray, and hand sanitizer will be provided by the church. Extra facial coverings must be provided by the group.
 - (7) Everyone is encouraged to wash their hands or to use a hand sanitizer while in the building and immediately after leaving.

Level 2

Groups of 20 or fewer people are allowed to meet outdoors, and groups of 10 or fewer people are allowed to meet indoors. Sunday programs may be partially or totally originated from the auditorium, with no more than 10 total participants. The

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procedures for outdoor gatherings are the same as in Level 1, except that groups may include up to 20 people. The following procedures apply to all groups meeting indoors, including those presenting the Sunday morning program from the church.

1. Individual pods must remain spaced as far as practical from other pods, with at least 6 feet distancing maintained at all times.
2. No more than 10 people may be in the church or other building at any one time.
3. Face coverings are required whenever 2 or more people not from the same pod are in a common room or other enclosed indoor space, regardless of separation distance.
4. Everyone is encouraged to wash their hands or to use a hand sanitizer while in the building and immediately after leaving.
5. Access to any one bathroom is limited to a single person, with a minimum of three minutes between users. Use sanitizing wipes to clean bathroom surfaces after each use.
6. No congregational singing, chanting, recitation, or similar activity is allowed. Choir rehearsals and performances are allowed with appropriate precautions.

All group activities using the church building or grounds must be scheduled through the normal church calendar procedures. Scheduling requests should be emailed to communications@ucdsm.org.

Level 3

Groups of any size are allowed to meet outdoors. Up to 50 people may meet indoors at the church. Groups meeting indoors at locations other than the church are limited to 20 persons.

Food should not be self-served. Everyone serving food should wear a facial covering and disposable gloves.

All church activities must be scheduled through the normal church calendar procedures with the exception of activities coordinated by church staff. Scheduling requests should be emailed to communications@ucdsm.org.

Attendees who experience COVID-19 symptoms within a week of a meeting should notify the Senior Minister.

The following procedures apply to outdoor gatherings.

1. Minimize contact with common surfaces.
2. Facial coverings are highly recommended for persons who are not yet fully vaccinated and are in extended close contact with other participants.
3. No communal singing or chanting is allowed unless all people that are not yet fully vaccinated are wearing appropriate facial coverings.

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The following procedures apply to all indoor gatherings.

1. Individual pods must remain spaced as far as practical from other pods, with at least 6 feet distancing maintained at all times.
2. Everyone that is not fully vaccinated is expected to wear a facial covering. Anyone may choose to wear a facial covering and everyone is encouraged to follow the CDC facial coverings guidelines. See CDC chart on page 11 or access at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/pdfs/choosingSaferAct.pdf?v=1>.
3. Everyone is encouraged to wash their hands or to use a hand sanitizer while in the building and immediately after leaving.
4. For gatherings that are sponsored by other organizations, facial coverings are encouraged and individuals participating should make a personal assessment of the risks posed by the activity. When in doubt, wear a mask!

The following additional procedures apply to all gatherings in the church building.

1. The maximum number of persons in the church building at any one time may not exceed 50. Occupancy of individual rooms should be limited to allow appropriate distancing.
2. The large activity room may not be used for group activities except for Family Promise because of the limited air exchange in that area.
3. A minimum of one hour must separate events in the church with more than 20 people.
4. The furnace blowers must be set to run continuously during and between events with more than 20 people, with a minimum run time of one hour following each event.

Level 4

The church building is open for normal use, including services, RE, meetings, etc. Procedures and precautions are shown below, but may be modified depending on the current conditions in the community, recommendations from the CDC, and the availability of a vaccine for youth. Consideration will also be given to those who are unable to be vaccinated due to medical conditions. The intention of these precautions is to ensure safety to all persons attending services and events at the church.

1. Get vaccinated. It is our best protection against COVID-19. Be aware that evolving SARS CoV2 variants continue to be an issue affecting the safety of all.
2. Anyone may choose to wear a facial covering, and everyone is encouraged to follow the CDC facial covering guidelines.
3. Everyone that is not fully vaccinated is expected to wear a facial covering when in close proximity to other attendees.
4. Facial coverings are **required** when more than 50 people are assembled in one area.
 - a. Exceptions will be granted to those with certain medical conditions and for children younger than 2 years.

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- b. Participating Celebrant team members that are fully vaccinated do not need to wear facial coverings when physically separated from the congregation.
 - c. Fully vaccinated choir members, musicians, and performers do not need to wear face coverings while performing.
 - d. Facial coverings may be removed while seated at tables for eating or drinking.
5. Ask “what is your comfort level with hugging or handshakes” before engaging in the behavior.
 6. Kitchen workers and servers are required to wear facial coverings.

Level 5

Church activities and building use are no longer limited by COVID related concerns.

These procedures may be modified at any time by the Board, and will be reviewed and updated regularly.

Metrics and Criteria

The metrics and criteria to be used to evaluate the on-going risk and to assist in determining when it is prudent to move from one level to either the next higher or the next lower level are described in the following paragraphs. The metrics provide a means of evaluating the prevalence of the disease and the rate that is spreading throughout the community. When the committee feels that a change in level is warranted, a recommendation sent to the Board for action. The opening Level will be communicated to the congregation as directed by the Board, with special emphasis on providing clear notification of changes and relevant changes in meeting restrictions.

The current value of COVID community metrics is available on the web site <https://iowacovid19tracker.org/>, which serves as a data source for metrics used by the Lens Committee. The following paragraphs provide instructions for finding each metric on the web site. Note that the web site is being updated continually, and the details of where to find specific data may change without notice. The criteria to be used for evaluating each metric is described in the next section.

Polk County positivity test rate, 14-day average: The positivity test rate must be below the value in the table, with a general downward trend. To find the data on the web site, click on ‘counties’, then scroll down and select Polk County. The current value of the 14-day positivity rate is shown in the first section titled ‘Snapshot Statistics’. Both current and historical data is shown in the Data Table in the ‘Testing Data’ section. Use the scroll bar below the Data Table to view the far right column labeled ‘14-day PCR & Antigen Test-Positivity (Polk).

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Currently active cases in Polk County and the state: The current number of active cases in Polk County and the total for the State must be below the value shown in the table, with a general downward trend.

The data for Polk County is shown in the graph and data table in the “Active Infections” section. The number of active infections is shown in the first data column, just to the right of the date column. The number of active cases can be converted to a percentage of residents by dividing by 490,161, the current county population.

The data for the State is found on the home page of the web site. Scroll down to the ‘Active Infections’ section. The number of statewide active cases is shown in the first data column of the table. The value is converted to the percentage of residents by dividing the number of cases by 3,155,000, the current state population.

Statewide weekly total of newly confirmed cases: From the home page, scroll down to the section labeled ‘Weekly Data’. The first graph is titled ‘Weekly Positives’. The value for each week can be seen by hovering the cursor over the graph bars. This data is updated on Saturday. The number of cases per 100,000 population is found by dividing the number taken from the web site table by 31.55.

The criteria to be applied to each metric described above is shown in Table 1. The committee will track the indicated metrics each week, and will consider a recommendation to move from the current level to the next higher level when the value of all of the metrics are either within or approaching the range shown for that higher level. The committee will consider a recommendation to move to the next lower level if the value of any one metric falls into the range for that lower level, or if the general trend of multiple metrics is moving toward a lower level. These values are provided for guidance only, and the committee may consider other factors in determining when to make a recommendation to the board to change the current level of opening.

In addition to these specific metrics, the committee will consider other factors that affect the prevalence of the virus and community transmission. This includes, among other things, the number of people being tested and the availability of hospital services in the area.

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Table 1: Metrics and criteria for each Level of opening for First Unitarian Church.

	The general range of the metric associated with each level, subject to review and interpretation by the Lens of the Future Committee and confirmation by the Board of Directors				
Metric	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Polk County positivity test rate, 14 day average	>10%	10-6%	6-4%	4-1%	<1%
Daily active cases in Polk County and percentage of population	>2,500, >0.51%	2,500 - 2,000, 0.51 - 0.41%	2,000 - 500, 0.41 - 0.10%	500 - 100, 0.10 - 0.02%	<100, <0.02%
Daily active cases in the State of Iowa and percentage of population	>16,000, >0.51%	16,000 - 12,000, 0.51% - 0.38%	12,000 - 3,000, 0.38% - 0.09%	3,000 - 1,000, 0.09% - 0.03%	<1,000, <0.03%
Statewide weekly total of newly confirmed cases and number per 100,000 population	>4200, >135.0	4,200 - 2,800, 135.0 - 88.7	2,800 - 700, 88.7 - 22.1	700 - 350, 22.1 - 11.1	<350, <11.1

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LEVELS OF OPENING*					
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
General Conditions	Uncontrolled spread, Positivity Rate >10%; Building closed	Flattening of curve of new cases, Positivity Rate 10-6%; Outdoor groups<10	Continued downward trend in new cases, Positivity Rate 6-4%; Outdoor groups<20, Indoor groups<10,	Limited spread, Positivity Rate 4-1%; Outside unlimited size groups, Indoor<20, Inside church<50	Limited infections, Positivity Rate <1%;
Business Operations	Building closed, Staff encouraged to work from home	Building closed, Limited bathroom access, Staff may work from home or in building	Building open for limited activities, bathrooms accessible, Staff may work from home or in building	Building open on regular schedule, bathrooms available, Staff may work from home or in building	Normal use
Programs and Services	On line only	On line only	On line and small groups in building	On line and limited auditorium access	Full auditorium access, with some safety procedures
Group Meetings	On line only	On line and outdoors	Outdoor groups<20, Indoor groups<10	Outside unlimited size, Indoor<20, Inside church<50	Unlimited size with precautions
Building Staff	Cleaning and maintenance with limited access	Cleaning and maintenance with limited access	Some staff may be in building	Normal building access with limited hours	No restrictions
Pastoral Care	Online or phone, only emergency in person	Mostly online or phone, in-person dependent on situation	Online, phone, or in-person, depending on situation and risk	Online, phone, or in-person with precautions, depending on situation and risk	No restrictions, but with appropriate precautions
RE Children & Youth	Online only	On line and outdoors	Outdoor groups<20, Indoor groups<10	Outdoor groups, Indoor groups<20	Allowed with appropriate precautions
Nursery and Childcare	Closed	Closed	Closed	Limited	Normal with precautions
Choir and Music	None	None	Limited with precautions	Allowed with precautions	Normal with precautions
General Restrictions	No in-person meetings	No indoor meetings, facial coverings required when social distancing is not possible	Facial coverings and social distancing when indoors, limited size of group meetings	Facial coverings and social distancing when indoors, limited size of indoor meetings	Distancing and facial coverings required, depending on current conditions
General Guidelines	Stay home, Stay healthy	Stay home if ill or have been exposed , limit contacts, and practice good hygiene	Stay home if ill or have been exposed , maintain social distance, use facial coverings indoors	Stay home if ill or have been exposed , maintain social distance, use facial coverings and limit size of indoor gatherings	Stay home if ill or have been exposed , Wash hands frequently, follow normal procedures for scheduling activities.

* See tracking metrics and limits for a listing of the criteria to be considered in determining the Level of Opening

Choosing Safer Activities

Accessible link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html>

	Unvaccinated People	Examples of Activities	Fully Vaccinated People
		Outdoor	
Safest		Walk, run, wheelchair roll, or bike outdoors with members of your household	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated family and friends	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission	
Less Safe		Dine at an outdoor restaurant with friends from multiple households	
Least Safe		Attend a crowded, outdoor event, like a live performance, parade, or sports event	
		Indoor	
Less Safe		Visit a barber or hair salon	
		Go to an uncrowded, indoor shopping center or museum	
		Attend a small, indoor gathering of fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people from multiple households	
Least Safe		Go to an indoor movie theater	
		Attend a full-capacity worship service	
		Sing in an indoor chorus	
		Eat at an indoor restaurant or bar	
		Participate in an indoor, high intensity exercise class	

Get a COVID-19 vaccine



Prevention measures not needed



Take prevention measures

Wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart, and wash your hands.

- Safety levels assume the recommended prevention measures are followed, both by the individual and the venue (if applicable).
- CDC cannot provide the specific risk level for every activity in every community. It is important to consider your own personal situation and the risk to you, your family, and your community before venturing out.

- If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all precautions.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

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The table below will be updated weekly to inform the congregation of the current level of opening and the values of the metrics being followed. It is intended to be posted on the church web site and other social media, as determined to be appropriate by the board, the senior minister, and the Communications Team. Printed copies may also be posted in the church and at other locations where groups are meeting, as we move to higher levels of opening.

EXAMPLE Weekly report for communicating COVID virus metrics to the congregation.

		The church is currently at LEVEL 2				
Line	Metric	Needed to Move to Level 3	Recorded Value			
			5/18/21	5/25/21	6/1/21	6/8/21
1	Polk County positivity test rate, 14 day average	4.0%	3.9%	3.1%	2.4%	1.9%
2A	Active cases in Polk County	500	1,438	1,122	732	532
2B	Active cases as percentage of Polk County residents	0.10%	0.29%	0.23%	0.15%	0.11%
3A	Active cases in the State of Iowa	3,000	8,033	6,507	4,564	3,276
3B	Active cases as percentage of Iowa residents	0.10%	0.25%	0.21%	0.14%	0.10%
4	Statewide weekly total of newly confirmed cases	700	1,679	1,281	817	626

Legend

Metric is within the limit that would allow consideration to move up to next Level

Metric is slightly above the limit that would allow consideration to move to next level

Metric is well above the limit that would allow consideration to move to next level



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Covenant for In-person Gatherings during COVID-19 Pandemic – to be read at the beginning of each In-person Gathering by the facilitator.

Covenant is the silk that joins Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations, communities and individuals together in a web of interconnection. The practice of promising to walk together is the precious core of our creedless faith.

Aware of the preciousness of health and life, as we attend this in-person gathering during the COVID-19 Pandemic, we covenant with each other to keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible:

1. I will not attend this meeting if I have any COVID-19 symptoms or feel unwell in any way whatsoever.
2. I take responsibility for my own personal risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 while attending this meeting.
3. I will speak up if anything happens that seems unsafe.
4. I will leave if I begin to feel unwell or if something happens that causes me to feel unsafe.
5. I will notify Rev. Amy or the leader of this gathering if I test positive for COVID-19 infection or become sick with COVID-19 symptoms within 7 days of attending this meeting.
6. We will honor our meeting leader(s) and will support one another in respect, kindness and care.