

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 occurred 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

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

The Opening Levels are currently being updated and revised by the LENS committee, including the procedures that are applicable at each Level of re-opening. The following procedures are currently in effect for the Level 3.

1. All meetings and events
 - a. The meeting facilitator must keep a record of all attendees
 - b. All attendees must be encouraged to notify the Senior Minister if they fall ill with Covid symptoms within a week of the group meeting.
 - c. Food and drinks may be shared, but should not be self-served. Everyone serving food must wear a facial covering and disposable gloves.

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- d. All meetings and events on church property must be scheduled through the normal church calendar procedures. Individuals planning an event should email a request to pbusch@ucdsm.org.
 - e. Everyone is encouraged to wash their hands or to use a hand sanitizer while at an event and immediately after leaving.
2. Outdoor gatherings
 - a. No limit on number of persons that can attend
 - b. Masks are recommended for unvaccinated persons
 - c. No communal singing or chanting is allowed unless all people that are not yet fully vaccinated are wearing appropriate facial coverings
3. Gatherings in the church building
 - a. Up to 50 persons may meet in the church auditorium. No more than 50 people should be in the church building at any one time, with the number in any single room limited to allow appropriate distancing.
 - b. The large activity room may not be used for group activities except for Family Promise because of the limited air exchange in that area.
 - c. Masks are required when two people that are in the same room cannot maintain 6 ft of separation, and when three or more people are in the same room.
 - d. Congregational and choir singing is allowed as long as everyone in the room is wearing a facial covering.
 - e. A minimum of one hour must separate events with more than 20 people.
 - f. 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.
 4. Indoor gatherings at other locations should follow the same guidelines, except the number of people allowed must be adjusted to reflect the individual conditions, including floor space and ventilation. Conditions should always allow for appropriate distancing.

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Metrics and Criteria

The criteria to be used to evaluate the on-going risk and to guide decisions to move from one level to either the next higher or the next lower level is the “Risk Level” that is calculated and published by CovidActNow.org. CovidActNow.org is an initiative of the Act Now Coalition, and is a partnership of Georgetown University Medical Center, Stanford Medicine, and the Harvard Global Health Institute. It is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded by volunteers in March 2020, that is working to help people make informed decisions by providing timely and accurate data about COVID in the U.S. Information about the initiative can be found at <https://covidactnow.org/covid-risk-levels-metrics>.

The CovidActNow.org Risk Level is updated weekly and is available for every county and state in the country, as well as for many of the larger metropolitan areas (including Des Moines). There are five levels of risk identified as follows.

- Low – Green
- Moderate – Yellow
- High – Orange
- Very High – Red
- Extreme – Dark Red

The LENS committee will monitor the Risk Level as published by CovidActNow.org as well as the CDC Guidelines and the response of local and state governments. When the committee feels that a change in level or changes in the current Level procedures is warranted, a recommendation will be sent to the Board for action. The current opening Level and the corresponding requirements will be communicated to the congregation as directed by the Board, with special emphasis on providing clear notification of relevant changes in meeting restrictions.

The current value of the CovidActNow.org risk level for Polk County is available on the web site https://covidactnow.org/us/iowa-ia/county/polk_county/?s=21851111. This status is updated daily, but most of the underlying data is only updated weekly.

The Opening Levels are currently being updated and revised by the LENS committee, including the procedures that are applicable at each Level of re-opening. This will include the correlation between the CovidActNow.org risk level and the Opening Level. Until that work is completed, the committee will use the CovidActNow.org data as one of the criteria for recommending changes in the opening restrictions.

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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.