

A Minority Viewpoint

The revised Procedures that are recommended by the Lens committee are the result of extensive work and include input from all members of the committee. The recommendation has been approved by a majority of the committee members for presentation to the Board. There have been a wide range of views expressed during the committee discussions, and I feel that it is important for the Board to be aware of other views that are not reflected in the proposed revisions.

I have three concerns with the revised procedures.

First, we have dropped almost all restrictions on community gatherings, including the size and congestion of gatherings. I understand that the requirement that all persons attending indoor functions must be fully vaccinated and masked will greatly reduce the risks, but I still believe that crowded conditions for extended time periods should be limited, particularly when the virus incidence in the community is extremely high.

Second, by eliminating all reference to levels of opening and the criteria for setting levels, we are left without any objective methodology to determine when it is appropriate to tighten or loosen restrictions on gatherings. Although the revised procedures still state that the committee will continue to review the risk level in the community and recommend revisions when appropriate, there are no defined limits that will trigger a change, so the process is totally subjective.

Finally, we no longer have a plan in place for what will be changed if conditions deteriorate and conversely, when conditions improve. This makes it difficult to react quickly if and when conditions change. It also leaves the congregation unable to plan ahead because there is no certainty as to how church activities will change as community conditions dictate revisions.

I support the committee recommendation, but also want the Board to be aware of the lack of full consensus among Lens Committee members. I urge the Board to consider the recommendation carefully and consider all ramifications of the proposed revisions.

Respectfully submitted

Al Powers

September 13, 2021

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The revised Guide for Meetings and Events being offered to the Board for consideration is the culmination of several weeks of hard work and thoughtful discussion by the Lens of the Future Committee. The revised guidelines represent like-minded views held by a majority of the members of the Committee who rightly stress the need of members of our congregation to be able to meet in person in community.

I think it is important for the Board to know, however, that the revised procedures do not reflect consensus and I would like to offer another viewpoint. I am concerned about the current Very High COVID-19 risk level in Polk County, in surrounding counties, and in Iowa as a whole. I work as an occupational health nurse who monitors COVID-19 infections and COVID-19 exposures among a workforce of 400 people. I have been monitoring 6-12 people at any one time over the past few weeks, about half of whom test positive for COVID-19 infection and half of whom either have COVID-like symptoms but don't get tested or have had known COVID exposure. Included are a surprising number of fully vaccinated people who contracted breakthrough infections.

So, for me there is a distinct disconnect between what I am dealing with at work and the approach of our revised guidelines. We are choosing to not follow the UUA's Updated Gathering Guidance. Other UU congregations I am connected with are following UUA Guidance and are pausing their plans to meet in person until later in the fall. I am also concerned that we on the Lens Committee no longer have a framework for determining what conditions of COVID-19 risk in the community would be sufficient to trigger temporary measures to slow the spread of the virus at church.

I know I am out of step with the rest of the Lens Committee and I do not want to be a barrier. Still, given the lack of consensus among Lens Committee members, I would like to offer another viewpoint to the Board as you take the proposed revised guidelines under consideration and form your own assessment of the best way forward.

Respectfully offered by Debra Rodgers
September 12, 2021