

## **UCE Guidelines for Building Use Updated December 17, 2021**

### **Preamble:**

The Covid Task Force, which includes ministers, staff, board leaders and medical professionals, has created a draft plan of how we welcome in-person participation in worship and faith formation for all ages. This plan is based on recommendations and advice from the World Health Organization, Center for Disease Control, Illinois and Evanston Health Departments, Unitarian Universalist Association, local UU and non-UU churches. This plan is for your feedback, questions, concerns, and suggestions. This is a community process, and we want everyone to have time to consider these matters. We are planning for multi-platform (both online and in-person) programs, including worship and faith formation for all ages, knowing that we will need to be responsive to the changing landscape of the pandemic. We are planning for a future where we can see each other's faces, hear each other's voices, and be in each other's presence – and where robust online options, safety measures, and other steps keep everyone connected and safe.

### **Our general principles:**

- Inclusivity and justice: We will not exclude people and will take special care that equity and anti-oppression are centered in our decision-making.
- Safety: We will prioritize keeping our people and the community safe. We will take measures to prevent community spread.
- Community is vital: We value our community and being together. We prioritize inclusion and safety while finding a variety of ways to gather.
- Pro -science: We support vaccination and the wearing of masks by those who are able as a scientific, reasonable, and loving decision. You protect yourself and others. We believe that vaccines are effective and trust the scientists who have worked on them.

We pledge that we will be transparent, responsive, and deliberate about how we go about this. Our public health officials have said that as we begin to have some in-person offerings, we have to be prepared to shift back to all virtual if conditions change. But in the same vein we will “Go slow and be flexible” as we lift restrictions.

### **Criteria for In-Person Worship:**

The following plan assumes Illinois remains in Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois Plan and Cook County has 50 or less Covid-19 daily new cases per 100,000 population using data from the Covid Act Now site:

[https://covidactnow.org/us/illinois-il/county/cook\\_county/](https://covidactnow.org/us/illinois-il/county/cook_county/).

We are also monitoring Evanston's Covid Tracker:

<https://evanston.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/5290c3e6b4084c83ba4aa9e7d70ff3e7>

If the measures of Covid-19 transmission in our community change, or if we have reason to be concerned about transmission at UCE (for example, if two or more households have a member that attended UCE in person and tests positive for Covid-19), worship services may return to livestream for a period of two weeks or more.

In all cases, we will continue to follow the advice of the IDPH and CDC as the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic evolve.

### **Masks:**

We will require all people to wear masks on UCE premises indefinitely. This policy is based on the need to protect the vulnerable in our community, including children under 12 who are currently ineligible for the vaccine.

Staff may remove their masks when working in their own office, and service leaders may remove their masks when speaking with adequate distance. People with any COVID or flu-like symptoms should worship online, and not in person. We may adjust these requirements based on CDC and IDPH guidance.

### **Youth Programming:**

If the weather cooperates, children's programs will be outside as long as possible. The Faith Formation of our congregation is a shared ministry. We need enough volunteers for the program to run. These volunteers need to be able and willing to be outside, on the grounds, being active with children during their program. Vaccines are required for volunteers who work with children.

Fall Faith Formation: Vaccination eligible cohorts (7th & 8th grade Coming of Age and High School Youth Group, and OWL) will meet in classrooms with multi-platform options. Due to limited classroom size the non-vaccine eligible cohorts (PreK - 6th grade) will meet outdoors, weather permitting, or in large meeting spaces for age-appropriate multi-platform lessons and for all-ages multi-platform faith formation sessions.

### **Proof of vaccination:**

As a community that values inclusion and collective care, we don't want to create in-person situations that inadvertently exclude those at higher risk, or create situations that force those at higher risk to publicly identify themselves. Our decision-making must center the needs of the most vulnerable.

We will only require proof of vaccination for volunteers working with children. Hospitality Volunteers should be vaccinated, but that, and our encouragement for everyone who is able to be vaccinated, is on the honor system. We do not feel it appropriate for the congregation to ask or keep track of this information. However, if we find that we have a large number of unvaccinated people whose choice to not get a vaccine puts those who cannot get one for medical reasons at risk, we will reevaluate this. The Board and staff agree that you can be trusted to get your vaccine – please do so.

### **Special Music and Song:**

Music with wind instruments and performed songs will be pre-recorded and played back during the service.

### **Hymn Singing:**

Knowing that not everyone in our congregation (or who might visit) will get vaccinated against COVID-19, we must rely on other safety measures to control the level of respiratory droplets that could be shared in group singing. Experts consulted by the UUA advise that the simultaneous presence of any three out of these four factors creates an adequately safe environment for singing during the pandemic:

- **Excellent ventilation:** You are singing outdoors, or you are singing indoors in a space with excellent ventilation (20 liters/min/person or >5 ACH.)
- **High quality masks:** High-filtering, low-leak masks (such as KN95) or well-fitting double masks worn by all participants.
- **Distance:** You have at least six feet between participants who are not in the same household.
- **Duration** of no more than 30 minutes.

Return to in-person worship will begin without communal singing. Humming or mouthing the words will be encouraged.

**Masked hymn singing and wind instruments playing will be allowed beginning December 12, 2021. Well-fitting medical grade, KN95/KN94, or multiple-layer cloth with inserted filters, are highly recommended.**

### **Coffee Hour:**

Our intention is to flow people into and out of the building without congregating inside. We will encourage members and friends to socialize outside if the weather permits. A tent has been installed on the south lawn for protection from sun and rain. A ramp is being installed to the south lawn for those who are less mobile. Coffee, water and lemonade will be provided outside only. We ask coffee hour attendees to return to mask wearing when not enjoying refreshments.

## **Hospitality Volunteers:**

On Sunday mornings, Hospitality Volunteers will be assisting with the flow of people into and out of the building and through to the sanctuary or into rooms 3 or 6.

Volunteers will be able to provide facemasks to congregants as needed.

A training session will be provided for Hospitality Volunteers.

## **Sanctuary:**

Chairs have been spaced apart for appropriate physical distancing in groups of 1, 2, 3, and 4. When you enter the sanctuary, please choose the smallest grouping of chairs to accommodate you and your family, so that the larger grouping of chairs are available for larger groups.

Our Shared Plate Program will be encouraged to still take place online; however, collection baskets will be available during the service.

After the service the Hospitality Volunteers will dismiss congregants one section at a time.

## **Overflow:**

If the sanctuary fills to capacity the Hospitality Volunteers will offer and redirect congregants to overflow seating in Room 3 and Room 6 for remote viewing.

## **Meetings:**

Congregational meetings should be multi-platform if meeting in-person, meaning that individuals can choose to join via Zoom as well as in-person. Technology has been upgraded in many of the meeting rooms and we will continue to work towards improving this technology.

Room occupancy will be based on room size and ability to safely distance. These numbers are based on non-related adults in the room. Please schedule your meetings through Jessica Meis at [admin@ucevanston.org](mailto:admin@ucevanston.org). It is helpful to fill out a [Room and Publicity Request form](#).

Room 2: 12

Room 3: 30

Room 5: 12

Room 6: 25

Sanctuary: 150

The following Group Expectations and Guidelines will be posted in meeting spaces and sent to group leaders:

- For the safety of your group, other groups and staff, please enforce these COVID-19 Guidelines and our COVID-19 community mitigation protocols listed below within your groups.
- Please sign in when you arrive at the building for your meeting or gathering and sign out upon leaving (other than Sunday mornings)
- Please ask members of your group to refrain from attending if they or someone in their household show signs of illness (coughing, fever, sore throat).
- Arrive no sooner than five minutes early and leave no later than five minutes after scheduled ending time.
- Small groups may eat together in room 3 (maximum of 18) or in the back of the sanctuary (maximum 25) spaced apart at least 6 feet. All participants should be fully vaccinated. Groups may decide if they would like to incorporate other safety precautions like a negative COVID test.
- Wear a facemask while traveling through the building.
- Individual impromptu meetings can take place on the grounds.
- Participants should inform the Senior Minister if they or members of their household test positive for Covid-19 within two weeks of attending an in-person meeting or gathering at UCE.

We do encourage individuals or families to visit the church property and enjoy our gardens and grounds at any time (no reservation required). Our Playscape is under construction and should be completed soon, adding to our opportunities for outdoor gatherings.

If small groups would like to meet on the grounds for a social gathering or meetings, please schedule through [admin@ucevanston.org](mailto:admin@ucevanston.org) to avoid conflicts.

### **COVID-19 community mitigation protocols:**

**Mask** – We are a mask-compliant community. When inside the building, everyone over the age of 2 years is required to wear a snug-fitting mask over the mouth and nose, regardless of vaccination status.

**Social Distance** – We have a consent culture. As we greet each other, we will respect each other's personal space, maintain physical distance, and establish mutual consent before making contact (i.e. handshake). You are also invited to add one of the available colored stickers to your nametag to indicate if you are

open to hugs (green), prefer elbow bumps (yellow), or need to maintain some physical distance (red).

**Hand Washing** – We will wash our hands for at least 20 seconds.

**Vaccination** – If we are able to get vaccinated, we will get vaccinated.

**Illness** - If you or a member of your household are not feeling well (fever, cough, headache, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell, etc.) do not come to in-person worship or meetings at UCE. Take care of yourself and talk to your doctor. Please inform the Senior Minister if you or a member of your household tests positive for Covid-19 within two weeks of attending an in-person meeting or gathering at UCE.