

UUCSV COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

(Last updated 9/17/22)

Current status/updates: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Pennsylvania&data-type=CommunityLevels

We have been successful with hybrid services and will continue to keep the church “open” with appropriate safety precautions while also continuing to share services with Zoom. This allows members to gauge their comfort level and decide if they would like to attend services in-person or attend via Zoom.

This policy is informed by recommendations from the CDC, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the UUA and is subject to change as the pandemic continues to unfold.

Policies have been crafted with input from our congregation with UU principles in mind: Our goal is to provide services to the best of our ability in a safe and welcoming environment to all members of our congregation. There are individuals who are immunosuppressed and unable to mount an immune response to vaccination, and individuals who may lack internet access. There are also children who are not yet eligible for vaccination. Equity and inclusivity are key to our mission, and we will do our best to provide services for all members safely.

Who do these policies apply to? These policies and procedures apply to members and non-member guests attending the UUCSV church building.

Who may gather at the church? The board believes that in-person gatherings can be done safely in the UUCSV church if all safety precautions listed below are followed.

Services - We will offer hybrid services and will continue to refine our approach to best serve our community.

How many people may gather at the church? The Board will continue to abide by any CDC or state recommendations for any in-person meetings. **At this time there are no specific limitations.**

At this time, the board has decided that in-person gatherings can be done safely in the UUCSV church, if all safety precautions listed below are followed.

In the case of a new variant and/or spike in COVID-19 or other communicable diseases, the Board reserves the right to suspend large in-person gatherings (i.e. >25 people).

Safety precautions for hybrid services

1 - Vaccination

We strongly recommend that all individuals who are eligible for vaccination to be vaccinated for communicable diseases, (e.g. COVID-19 and influenza) to maintain as safe of an environment as possible for in-person activities. Although COVID-19 infection does provide some immunity, neither infection nor vaccination provide lasting immunity. Thus, we strongly encourage and trust members to stay up to date with COVID-19 and other vaccinations, per CDC recommendations.

Because of their close interaction with others, all employees of the congregation (Minister, RGL Director, Administrator, and Music Director) as well as volunteers conducting business on behalf of the congregation or official programs of the congregation (e.g. RGL classes, small group ministry, hospitality, pastoral care) **are required** to be vaccinated for COVID-19 per CDC recommendations for their age and level of risk.

We require all children to receive recommended vaccinations per Pennsylvania school recommendations. This does not currently include COVID-19 vaccination, though we do strongly encourage COVID-19 vaccination. This policy takes into account the fact that the vast majority have some level of immunity due to either vaccination or prior infection. In the spirit of inclusiveness, children can come to services as long as they abide by all precautions recommended by the CDC (masking if age 2 or older, handwashing/sanitizing)

2 - Self-screening for COVID-19 symptoms

Individuals who have any symptoms that could be due to COVID-19 infection or were recently exposed to COVID-19 must stay at home. At-home or clinic testing for COVID-19 is strongly encouraged if an individual was recently exposed or infected. You can go to <https://www.covidtests.gov> and order free test kits for your family. Free tests are also available through the PA Dept of Health.

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Public%20Testing.aspx>

To be conservative, we recommend members to stay away from the church for 10 days after exposure and continue to mask per this policy. *(CDC recommends quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days.)*

Symptoms of COVID-19 infection can range from no symptoms to fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea.

Close contact to COVID-19 means being within 6 feet of someone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19 or an infected person who shows no symptoms but later tests positive for COVID-19.

3 - Masking and handwashing/hand sanitizer is mandatory upon entry

At this time, given elevated cases in our area all members are expected to wear well-fitted masks (preferably surgical masks if possible) over their mouths and noses and use hand sanitizer or handwash upon entry into the building. **We will be revisiting this policy in the future when levels come down to low per CDC.**

(See note at bottom Q&A)

4 - Social distancing

Social distancing can help prevent/reduce transmission if someone has asymptomatic infection due to COVID-19 or other viruses. Social distancing is still encouraged in general, but at the discretion of our members.

5 - Cleaning/disinfection

Weekly cleaning will be performed by a professional cleaner with special focus on high-touch areas (door handles, bathroom, sink areas) and vacuuming every other week.

6 - Singing - Airborne transmission is the major route of transmission. As there is potential risk of transmission of the virus with singing, we will abide by UUA recommendations and avoid boisterous indoor singing. We are allowing quiet singing or humming, while wearing a well-fitting mask.

7 - Food/drinks - Coffee hour has been an important time for many for social interaction and togetherness. For the time being, due to a combination of COVID-19 concerns and lack of available volunteers for setup and cleanup, coffee hour is suspended until further notice.

8 - Air filtration systems - We have a forced air system with 4 overhead units with recently replaced air filters. We do not believe that air filtration by itself would be enough to ensure safety, which is why we have all the other measures in place. When it is warmer, we will try to open windows as possible to allow for air circulation.

9 - Contact tracing - We will do our best to keep our congregation safe and follow PA Dept of Health guidance. If a congregant is diagnosed with COVID19 and had been recently in a group meeting at the church, we will notify the PA Dept of Health and will follow their instructions; official contact tracing would be done by them. We will close the church temporarily for an additional cleaning and follow PA Dept of Health guidance (see Q&A below for if a member becomes infected).

FAQ about hybrid reopening services

Q: Why have hybrid services at all?

A: Having a Zoom option is necessary because some people are unable to mount an immune response to vaccination (i.e. undergoing chemotherapy, on chronic immunosuppression), or may feel that any risk of COVID-19 is unacceptable. There are also individuals who do not have internet access or may have difficulty with virtual services for various reasons. The hybrid option allows for everyone to decide what is best for themselves and their families.

Q: I'm vaccinated; why do I still have to wear a mask indoors during service?

A: While vaccination reduces the risk of severe infection, you can still be infected with COVID-19 and be infectious. Asymptomatic spread is possible, and so we believe it is in the best interest of the congregation to continue to wear masks while indoors to protect ourselves and loved ones who may remain at higher risk.

Earlier during the pandemic (July 2021), University of California San Francisco hospitals had been testing everyone who walked in the door and discovered a 2% COVID-positive rate among those who had no symptoms for COVID-19—even though San Francisco has among the country's highest vaccination rates.

Let's imagine that 2% of our congregation could be walking around with asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic COVID-19. If 50 people meet for services, that could be possibly 1 person on average who might have asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic COVID-19 and could spread the disease. If we are doing everything correctly--staying home when we feel sick or have a known exposure to COVID-19, washing hands frequently, wearing masks during services--we can minimize that risk. While **you** may not feel like the risk is sufficient to wear a mask, others who could carry an infection home to their loved ones who may be at risk may feel differently. So please wear a mask for now during services.

Q: Is it possible to still be infected by the virus while vaccinated, with a mask on, and physically distanced 6 feet?

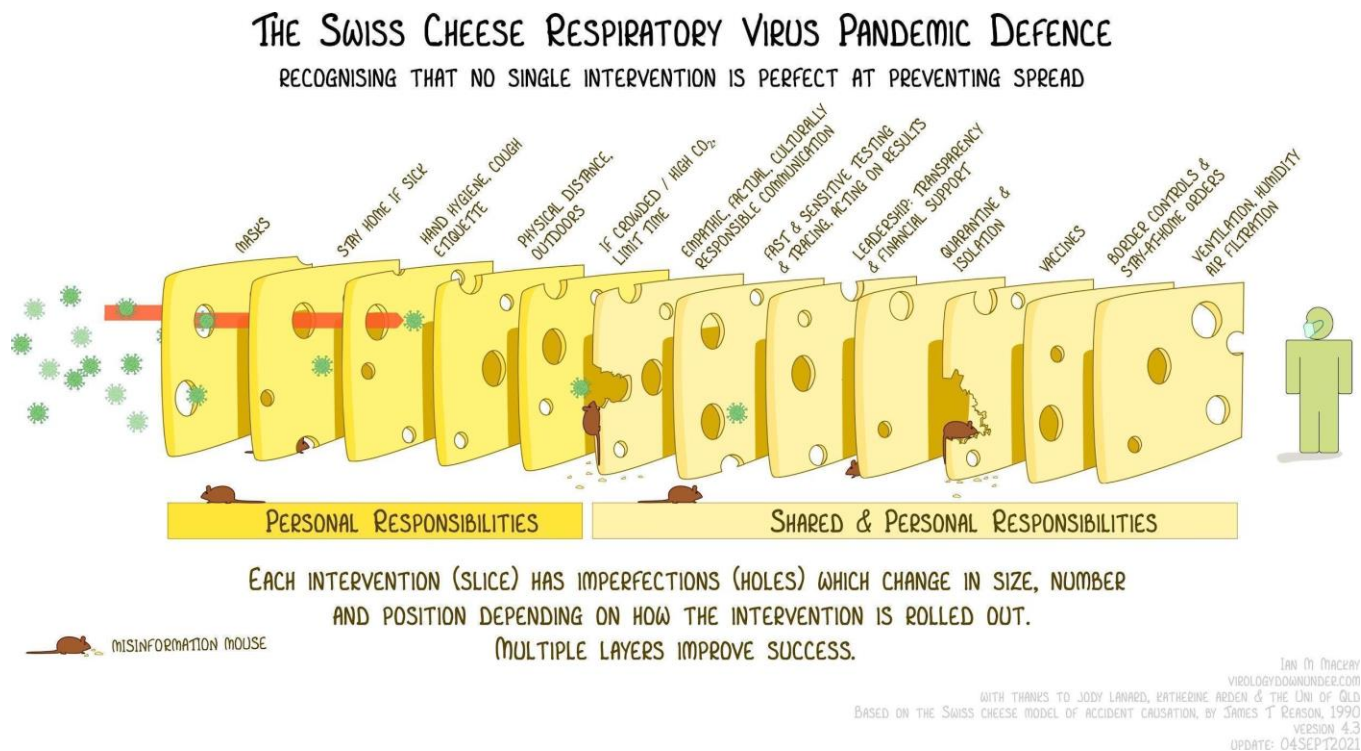
A: While the vaccine offers protection and is much better than not being vaccinated, it is still possible to be infected and some variants such as Omicron are particularly infectious. This may be due to the variant itself, or to protection from the vaccine wearing off.

Thus, it is important to wear a mask as an extra level of protection. They have to be worn correctly, and the type of mask does matter. Well-fitting N-95 masks work better than surgical masks which work better than cloth masks. N-95 or KN95 masks are now available, unlike earlier in the pandemic.

Q: Is 3 feet, 6 feet, or 10 feet enough distance?

A: With more distance, the less likely a virus particle could be close enough to someone else to infect them. The CDC has been using 6 feet as a general guideline, but some people may feel that 10-12 feet is more appropriate. Technically, if you had COVID-19 and sneezed without a mask on, you could deliver the virus quite far. We will do our best and encourage members to optimize distancing when attending hybrid services or any group meetings in person.

Below is my favorite image from the pandemic illustrating the various levels of protection against the virus. Together, these measures can help prevent the spread and ensure that individuals who would like to have some form of in-person meeting can continue to do so at UUCSV as much as possible.



Q: Are hybrid services planned for the entire year?

A: This is clearly a fluid situation that changes from day to day. We will monitor the situation on a weekly or even daily basis. If there are specific state or local health department notices about transmission in the community, we may need to go back to full virtual services during an outbreak. In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the building, there will be strict cleaning and disinfection, and we will consider whether there is a need to switch to full virtual services to contain any outbreak.

Q: What happens if a member who attended service is found to have COVID-19?

A: We expect any member who develops COVID-19 and attended an in-person meeting at the church to notify me (Alex Chang cell 614-886-3894) or any board member. We will notify the PA Dept. of Health who will provide us with further guidance and will do contact tracing. We will temporarily close the church, schedule an additional cleaning of the church in advance of any

other meetings there and notify the rest of the congregation that an (unnamed) member has been diagnosed with COVID-19 infection and to observe for any symptoms (vaccinated individuals are likely to have only mild symptoms). If members of the congregation develop any symptoms they should be tested for covid-19 and notify us if they test positive so that we can notify the Pa. Dept. of Health and plan next steps to promote safety for our community.