



## First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee

### Policy on FUSM Open / Close Status during COVID-19 Pandemic

1/27/2022

Policy Owner: Senior Minister

COVID Re-Opening Team

1. **Purpose:** This policy outlines why, when, and at what levels the church will re-open, and re-close, during the COVID-19 pandemic
2. **Policy Statement:** The First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee will re-open in-person church activities as soon as it is safe to do so, and after a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine is widely and equitably available<sup>1</sup>, but not before September 12, 2021 (with the exception of outdoor activities and memorial services as feasible).
3. **Related Procedures:** None at this time.

From Spring of 2020 through Fall of 2021, First Church used the Milwaukee County COVID-19 incidence<sup>2</sup>, which indicates the risk of transmission, to determine the safety of in-person indoor activities. In October, when it became clear we would not meet the “low-transmission” threshold needed to safely gather for in-person indoor worship anytime soon, we pivoted to use vaccination and negative tests as our COVID Safety measure instead. The plan to use vaccination and negative tests as our primary safety criteria, with many additional layers of precautions, is in place now. If a COVID-19 variant has significant vaccine escape, meaning there are a substantial number of breakthrough cases, then the COVID Team will reassess safety precautions, as they have done with Omicron and delaying our in-person indoor worship return from February 2022 until March of 2022.

#### **When Can First Church Gather In-Person Indoors:**

**For Worship:** In-person, indoor worship of 100 attendees (plus worship leaders and staff) will be allowed with a system for checking vaccination or test status of all attendees. First Church will retain online worship whether in-person worship is available or not. Layers of precautions:

- Worship attendees ages 5 and older must be willing to share proof of full vaccination (not boosted) or a negative PCR test (antigen tests are not acceptable) taken within 72 hours of worship. Attendees ages 4 and under are welcome without vaccination or negative test. Vaccination is required for Ushers.
- KN95, KF94, or N95 masks are required. Some will be available at the door.
- Congregational singing is not allowed, but humming is.
- A masked worship soloist or small ensemble of singers is allowed, as are woodwind and brass instruments, when played with the bell mask.
- All speakers, singers, and woodwind/brass instrumentalists at services must be fully vaccinated and boosted.
- Speakers can remove their masks while speaking.
- Receiving line is acceptable, maintaining 6 feet of distance during it is encouraged.
- Offering plate will be passed, as transmission risk through surfaces is low.
- Social Hour will take place in the Leenhouts Common Room, without food or beverages.

**For Religious Education:** Sunday morning in-person, indoor religious education can begin when worship does.

- Attendees ages 5 and older must be willing to share proof of full vaccination (not boosted) or a negative PCR test (antigen tests are not acceptable) taken within 72 hours of worship. Attendees ages 4 and under are welcome without vaccination or negative test.
- Religious Education volunteers must be fully vaccinated and boosted.
- KN95, KF94, or N95 masks are required for ages 4 and up; recommended, as possible, for ages 3 and under. Child-size masks will be provided.
- Capacity and time limits for HVAC zones in the basement must be observed.
- Any child who displays symptoms during religious education classes will be sent home.

**For Singing:** The choir, the house band, and other church small group ensembles can sing together, indoors and outdoors, wearing singing masks and maintaining at least 6 feet of distance between singers. Indoors, singing is limited to 45 minutes in the sanctuary, and 45 minutes in the Common Room, as they are the best rooms for ventilation. In the Common Room, singing groups should open the windows while singing.

**In Small Groups (no more than 20 people):**

- Indoor staff-led small groups will be allowed beginning on 11/01/2021 under strict vaccination and testing criteria, regardless of SARS-CoV-2 incidence.

- Indoor member-led small groups will be allowed after 3/01/2022 and once the group's leaders have completed tech training and training on vaccination and testing criteria.
- Each group leader will be responsible for determining that participants have been fully vaccinated (defined as 2 weeks after the last dose) by viewing their vaccine cards (or a photo). For participants who choose not to be vaccinated, the group leader will be responsible for viewing proof of a negative PCR test (antigen tests are not acceptable) collected within 72 hours of the event start time. If more than 2 persons in any group opt for testing in lieu of vaccination, the group leader will notify the COVID Team to determine how to proceed. The leader will inform all participants of these rules prior to the first in-person, indoor meeting, and individuals will determine their comfort level with participation.
- An online option will always be offered.
- KN95, KF94, or N95 masks are required
- Masks can be pulled down when a person is speaking, with the full consent of the in-person group.
- No food or beverages may be served.

**For Pastoral Care:**

- Vaccinated clergy can provide in-person indoor pastoral care services once they are fully vaccinated.
- Fully vaccinated Pastoral Care Associates (PCAs) may also offer one-to-one in-person, indoor pastoral care visits with fully vaccinated congregants. PCAs will need to show proof of vaccination to FUSM staff, but the members being visited only need to verbally verify their vaccination status.
- Members who are not vaccinated can receive either online or outdoor pastoral care.

**For Memorial Services:**

- First Church will re-open for memorial services in the sanctuary with a 25 person attendance limit regardless of the Milwaukee County SARS-CoV-2 incidence level. All other indoor gatherings of 20 or more people (e.g., weddings) will be subject to the stricter in-person worship criterion.
- Memorial Services with a 100 person attendance limit will be allowed when in-person indoor worship is allowed.
- All in-person worship precautions apply to Memorial Services.

**Staff:** First Church employees can work in the church.

- All staff must have all medically recommended vaccinations, including boosters, proof of which must be provided quarterly.

- KN95, KF94, or N95 masks are required
- Staff members wishing to work remotely for various reasons should negotiate that with their supervisor.
- Additional accommodations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**In-Person Outdoor Gatherings:**

Outdoor activities are allowed regardless of incidence rate, provided masks are worn at all times and attendees from different households maintain 6 feet of physical distancing. Capacity must allow for 30 square feet per person.