

IN-PERSON REGATHERING FAQ (rev. 8 October 2021)

How are we planning to regather and where do these metrics and other recommendations come from?

The Regathering Task Force has consulted a variety of sources to develop the working guidelines for phased regathering based on specified metrics. Chief among these sources is the Wisconsin Council of Churches which has provided regular recommendations for faith communities based on the current science. We especially appreciated their framing of decisions as on a spectrum of safety - not as safe or unsafe - and their focus on prioritizing the health and well-being of our neighbor in all decisions.

[Returning to Church – Wisconsin Council of Churches \(wicchurches.org\)](http://wicchurches.org)

What about this study I read about...?

If you have a recent study or article that you believe will help inform our decision-making, please feel free to forward to Kim Darling (kdarling@gmail.com). The TF is committed to staying up-to-date on the research.

What is Phase 3a?

This is the first phase of regathering where individuals not actively participating in the service are able to attend. During Phase 3a, there will be open sign ups for up to 25 in-person worshippers in addition to up to 10 worship leaders, ushers and AV folk. We will continue to require masking and not allow singing during Phase 3a.

What is Phase 3b?

As case rate numbers decrease and vaccination rates increase, we will increase the numbers of in-person attendees to 50. All other protocol remain the same as in Phase 3b.

What is Phase Four?

When metrics allow, we will provide open sign ups to all members of our community. Attendees will be expected to remain masked during their time in the church building. Worship services and all group church events (nurtures, congregational meetings, commission meetings, etc.) will also continue virtually.

Why aren't we requiring vaccination for attendance?

Some are currently unable to be vaccinated either because of age or health concerns. In addition, vaccine distribution and our country's history of medical injustice means that the largest proportion of those who have not been vaccinated reside in many of the most vulnerable communities - the poor, non-English speakers, immigrants, people of color. Finally, vaccination does not guarantee that someone cannot catch or spread COVID. While our vaccines are extremely effective and truly a miracle of science, they are not 100% effective. They are less effective, for example, in some immuno-compromised groups. The only way we will be able to gather safely in large groups is to help our community reach herd immunity.

Why aren't we taking temperatures at the door?

Studies show it does not help prevent spread. The study referenced in the linked article found that less than 8% of respondents reported having a fever within 10 days of becoming sick. Given the large percentage of folks who are asymptomatic, only about 4.6% of people have a fever while they are contagious. Instead of relying on checking on one symptom of COVID at the door, we ask attendees to monitor their own well-being for any sign they might have become infected (fatigue, cough, headache, shortness of breath, or a fever)

<https://precisionhealth.iu.edu/news-multimedia/news/fever-scans-may-not-be-helping-stop-the-spread-of-covid19.html>

How do I volunteer to usher or assist with worship?

If you wish to volunteer as a reader or liturgist during Sunday service (either in-person or via Zoom), please look for a signup sheet in the church newsletter or worship folder. If you wish to usher, please contact Outreach and Membership.

When can we sing?

We don't know yet, but probably not until herd immunity is reached. Unfortunately, the research has been fairly consistent that congregational singing is a high risk activity in spreading COVID. More recent research indicates it may be safer to have an individual or a small group to sing in the service, and we continue to closely monitor that research and work with the Choir to develop ways to bring music to our service.

When will we have childcare and in-person Sunday School again?

Christian Education is developing a phasing schedule.

Are we going to stop having virtual services?

No! One of the great blessings of this time has been the push it provided our congregation to offer virtual services. This has allowed us to welcome back geographically distanced members and welcome in new geographically distanced members. We are committed to maintaining a virtual option for worship even when we are fully back in person for all who are unable (for any reason) to gather with us in the sanctuary.

Are the guidelines set in stone?

No! The task force and staff continue to monitor the on-going research and recommendations from the CDC and other authorities. As we gain experience and as recommendations and information evolves, we will update and revise the guidelines. We are committed to returning to in-person worship services as quickly as we can do so, consistent with protecting the health of all in our community, including the most vulnerable among us.