



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## COVID GUIDELINES

(as of March 24, 2023)

As available metrics have become increasingly unreliable, we have found ourselves struggling to determine which phase of our COVID Safety Plan we are in. Additionally, as we continue to evaluate risk profiles for various church activities in light of continually evolving variants and recommendations, we've often found ourselves modifying guidelines within a phase. Our COVID-19 Safety Team and Council have determined that a standing list of guidelines reviewed monthly better aligns with how the church currently functions. As has been consistent during the whole of the pandemic, our overriding priorities remain to balance the health of the most vulnerable in our community with people's need to worship and gather with one another.

### Metrics

As at home tests have become the standard for determining if one has COVID, the traditional CDC metrics have become unreliable. We are currently taking a two-pronged approach towards assessing risk levels in our community.

1. We attempt to stay up-to-date on the current state of the virus including new variants and safety recommendations. We also monitor how the virus is impacting hospitalizations in Europe as this has served as a warning signal over the last two years.
2. We focus on trends in case counts and hospitalizations and monitor wastewater numbers in surrounding communities.

### Sunday Morning

This category refers to Sunday morning worship and any post-worship activities including nurtures, guest speakers, congregational meetings, and coffee hour.

- Masks are optional.
- No attendance limits.
- Communion conducted in the round with individual servings of bread and juice.
- Coffee Hour may be held indoors in the Community Hall.
- Please note that all ushers are required to be vaccinated.

### Christian Education Programming

This refers to CE Programming that is targeted at our children and youth. Adult CE programming falls into either the Sunday Morning or Small Group Activities.

- Classes will be in-person in the CE Suite.
- Masks are optional.
- Please note that all CE volunteers are required to be vaccinated.

### **Small Groups**

This category includes gatherings like commission meetings, book groups, Bible Workbench, and the Meditation group. Members of these groups are generally known to one another even when the group is open to the public.

- In-person meetings taking place.
- Masks are optional.
- Church groups are encouraged to offer events in hybrid mode when possible.
- Please make masks available to participants by placing a box from the office in the room of your event in case participants have forgotten to bring theirs.

### **Choir Practice**

This category refers to any event that only includes choir members and staff.

- In-person rehearsals may occur.
- Masks are optional.
- Please note that all choir members who are practicing or performing in person are required to be vaccinated.

### **Other Large Gatherings**

This category includes events such as memorial services, ordinations, and special speakers scheduled for any time not immediately after Sunday morning worship.

- No attendance limits
- Masks are optional.

### **Vaccinations**

We encourage everyone to be vaccinated but do not generally require vaccination to attend church events. However, the following volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated:

- Choir members who rehearse or perform in-person
- Ushers
- Sunday School teachers
- Drop-in Center Volunteers

Fully vaccinated is defined as

- Having received the primary series and the first booster
- Remaining up-to-date with boosters as recommended by the CDC
- When a new booster becomes recommended, staff members have 14 days to receive the booster in order to be considered fully vaccinated.

Proof of vaccination will be provided to the church office. If you have any questions or concerns about our vaccination policy, please feel free to reach out to Rev. Amanda or Rev. Sam.

We may also have certain events where vaccinations or masks are required; those will be determined on a case-by-case basis.