

# Working Document of In-Person Practices

*for United Christian Church of Austin - May 18, 2021*

This document was developed by an appointed team of staff, congregation members, and congregational leaders. It was made in consultation with documents from the Centers for Disease Control, the Insurance Board of the United Church of Christ, and fellow churches and clergy. It also takes into account data from a survey of our own members. What has been developed is a living document that reflects our collective desire as a congregation to come together again in-person in a way that is both safe and inclusive of our differing levels of comfort.

**We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward.**

While our life together will look different right now, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too. There is no going back to before; our online ministry is here to stay. We look forward to living into this new chapter of hybrid ministry at United Christian Church of Austin.

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# Indoor Worship

## Arrival Practices:

1. HVAC System will begin running two hours before worship and remain running two hours after for ventilation.
2. You will be asked to worship with us online if
  - a. you are experiencing two or more of the symptoms of [Covid-19 listed on our door sign](#)  
OR
  - b. you have been in close contact with someone with Covid within the last 14 days.
3. Adults are encouraged to worship with us online if you are not vaccinated and/or are immunocompromised.
4. Those over 2 years of age and without a precluding medical condition will be asked to wear a mask that covers the mouth and nose. Masks will be provided for those without.
5. Greeters will ask that worshippers sanitize hands upon entry.
6. Greeters will ask guests to sign the guest book and provide contact information so that all may be alerted, along with our community, of any positive Covid-19 case reported.
7. Ushers will open the doors at 8:35 and 10:35. Please plan to arrive before 8:50 or 10:50 so everyone may be seated. Worship will begin at 9 and 11. The sanctuary doors will remain open for ventilation.
8. Deacons will provide communion kits at the sanctuary entrance/exit along with an offering box.
9. The order of worship will be contactless and accessed in the following ways:
  - a. On a mobile device through a shared link and QR code OR
  - b. On the screens at the front of the sanctuary.
  - c. (Limited paper bulletins will be available for the visually impaired.)
10. Safe Seating:
  - a. Up to 50 worshippers (not including staff & volunteers) may sit in the sanctuary at a social distance on chairs.
  - b. Pews must be removed and stored in order to accommodate this number at a social distance.
  - c. Rows of chairs will be placed at a safe depth.
  - d. Ushers will leave two empty chairs on either side of each household, and/or four between each household.
  - e. Ushers will seat worshippers from the front of the sanctuary to the back.
  - f. Ushers will seat worshippers together in household pods.
  - g. After 50 worshippers, about another 15 worshippers may be seated at a social distance in the fellowship hall. (The number 15 is based on visibility rather than social distancing.)

## **Worship Practices:**

1. Music will be instrumental or led by a single singer; there will no congregational singing until further notice.
2. In lieu of passing offering plates, there will be an offering box to collect offerings at the entrance/exit.
3. In lieu of passing communion plates or intinction, communion kits will be available for pickup upon entering the sanctuary.
4. The “Passing of the Peace” will be modified to discourage physical contact.
5. Ushers will dismiss worshippers at the end of worship, encouraging worshippers to leave from the back of the sanctuary to the front.
6. To maintain social distancing, signage will encourage only one person/household to occupy the restroom at a time.
7. Microphones sharing will be discouraged or microphones will be sanitized between users.
8. A single worship-leader at a time may remove their mask while speaking or singing on the chancel as long as they are fully-vaccinated and social distancing.
9. Children in Worship:
  - a. Children will be encouraged to remain with their households. Worship activity bags will be provided.
  - b. Whenever possible, two vaccinated children’s ministry volunteers may take children outside to the playground during worship.
  - c. Nursery care will be on hold until further notice.
  - d. During the children’s sermon, children will be encouraged to remain where they are seated at this time, rather than gathering on the chancel.

## **Post-Worship Practices:**

1. There will be no official church programming indoors after worship at this time, and indoor gathering will not be encouraged.
2. Weather permitting, outdoor coffee hour may be held outside in the church yard.
3. Any high touch areas should be disinfected between worship services, such as lector microphones, offering box, and door handles.

**\*We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward.**

While worship will look different, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too.

# Outdoor Worship

1. The 9 AM worship service may be held outdoors at the staff's discretion and whether permitting.
2. We will ask that you join us for online hybrid worship any Sunday if
  - a. you are experiencing two or more of the symptoms of [Covid-19 listed on this sign](#) OR
  - b. you have been in close contact with someone with Covid within the last 14 days.
3. Worshippers over 2 of age without a precluding medical condition will be asked to mask unless they are seated in the outdoor worship area. Masks must be put back on once worship has ended.
4. Fully vaccinated worship leaders may remove masks if they wish while leading worship if they can maintain a social distance from people outside their household. Masks must be put back on when worship has ended.
5. Social distancing will be encouraged verbally and with signage.

**\*We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward.**

While outdoor worship will look different, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too.

## Other Ministries and Activities

1. All other official church activities, including all Youth and Children's activities, will mask indoors until further notice.
2. For outdoor activities, decisions may be made based on coordinating staff member's discretion and/or approval from the executive committee.
3. We will ask that all volunteers working with youth and children be fully vaccinated.
4. Hand-washing, social distancing, and self-screening will be promoted at all in-person church activities.

**\*We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward.**

While children and youth ministries will look different, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too.

# Notes

## General:

- We ask that outside groups using the building (AA, photography, scouting, etc) to
  - wear masks at all times inside the building
  - disinfect high touch surfaces (such as door handles and light switches) upon leaving
  - practice social distancing (unless seated at tables)
  - refrain from serving food and beverages
  - inform the church of any positive Covid-19 cases among its attendees
  - Groups of more than 10 people must be in the sanctuary or fellowship hall
- Disinfecting wipes will be provided in all restrooms and in the kitchens for common use items.
- Two hand sanitizer stations will be located in high traffic areas.
- Social distancing will be encouraged verbally and with signage.
- Signage will be posted reminding families of one household per restroom.
- Two contactless thermometers are available, particularly by children and youth ministries.

## Metrics for Revision:

- The above practices will be re-evaluated when any one of the following conditions are met:
  - August 1, 2021 (fall church programming begins)
  - Travis County falls to stage 1
  - Travis County reaches stage 4
  - Children under 12 years of age are approved for vaccination