

Working Document of In-Person Practices

for United Christian Church of Austin - January 12, 2022

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. Air purifiers will be turned on in occupied spaces when staff arrives, and will be turned off when those spaces are no longer occupied.
2. You will be asked to worship with us online if
 - a. you are experiencing a recent onset of any of the symptoms of [COVID-19 listed on our door sign](#) OR
 - b. you have been in [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 within the last 5 days and are not vaccinated or not [up-to-date](#) with COVID-19 vaccination OR
 - c. you are awaiting a COVID-19 test result or have tested positive in the past [10 days](#) OR
 - d. you have recently returned from [domestic](#) or [international](#) travel and are not vaccinated or not up-to-date with vaccination
3. Adults are encouraged to worship with us online if you are not [up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccination](#) and/or are immunocompromised.
4. Those 2 years of age and older and without a precluding medical condition will be asked to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) that fits snugly over the mouth and nose. Masks will be provided for those without.
5. Hand sanitizer is available and thermometers are available for temperature checks 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 as often as possible.
8. 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.)
9. Safe Seating:
 - a. Worshippers will be encouraged to maintain safe distancing in the pews.
 - b. When it is not possible to socially distance, overflow seating will be managed by deacons.

Worship Practices:

1. Music will be instrumental or led by a single singer.
2. In lieu of passing offering plates, there will be an offering box to collect offerings at the entrance/exit, as well as plates by the side aisles as well as plates by the side aisles.
3. In lieu of passing communion plates or intinction, communion kits will be available at the entrance of the fellowship hall and Sanctuary.
4. The "Passing of the Peace" will be modified to discourage physical contact.
5. Communion procedures:
 - a. Stages 1-4: Communion kits will be offered at the communion table. The common loaf may also be distributed at the pastor's discretion. Participants may have the option to come forward in a socially distanced manner. Participants will be asked to take communion when they have returned to their seats.
 - b. Stage 5: Deacons will provide communion kits at the sanctuary entrance/exit along with an offering box in Stage 5. Participants will remain in their seats and take communion at the appropriate time.
6. To maintain social distancing, signage will encourage only one person/household to occupy the restroom at a time.
7. A single worship-leader at a time may remove their mask while speaking or singing on the chancel as long as they are up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccination and there is adequate social distancing. The congregation is encouraged to hum, rather than sing.
8. Church attendees will be asked to sign the pew pads, which will assist in contact tracing, should a COVID-19 exposure occur.
9. Children in Worship:
 - a. In stage 5, Children will remain with their households. Worship activity bags will be provided.
 - b. In stage 4, two vaccinated children's ministry volunteers may take children outside to the playground during worship, weather permitting.
 - c. In stages 1-3, inside and outside activities will be provided by vaccinated and trained staff and volunteers
 - d. Thermometers are available for temperature checks.
 - e. Nursery care will be on hold until further notice.
 - f. Time for Children:
 - i. Stages 1-4: Children may have the option to come forward and sit in a socially distanced manner toward the front of the Sanctuary.

- ii. Stage 5: Children will be asked to remain in their seats during the Time for Children.

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.

***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 weather permitting.
2. We will ask that you join us for online hybrid worship any Sunday if
 - a. you are experiencing a recent onset of any of the symptoms of [COVID-19 listed on our door sign](#) OR
 - b. you have been in [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 within the last 5 days and are not vaccinated or not [up-to-date](#) with COVID-19 vaccination Covid within the last 5 days, and have had no onset of symptoms OR.
 - c. you are awaiting a COVID-19 test result or have tested positive in the past [10 days](#) OR
 - d. you have recently returned from [domestic](#) or [international](#) travel and are not vaccinated or not up-to-date with vaccination.
3. Worshippers 2 years of age and older and 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. Worship leaders with up-to-date vaccination 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 their part of the service 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. In stages 1-4, all other official church activities, including all Youth and Children's activities, will mask indoors until further notice. In stage 5, all activities other than worship, will be held online.
2. In extenuating circumstances, the pastor may choose to offer worship services only online. Notification of changes to the worship schedule will be announced through all available communication channels.
3. For outdoor activities, decisions may be made based on coordinating staff member's discretion and/or approval from the executive committee.
4. We will ask that all volunteers working with youth and children be up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccination.
5. 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:
 - May 2022 (when spring church programming ends)
 - Travis County falls to stage 1
 - Travis County reaches stage 4
 - Travis County reaches stage 5
 - Children under 5 years of age are approved for vaccination