

United Church of Christ in Robesonia

COVID Safety Plan

Revised: Sunday, May 29, 2022

As of May 29, 2022, we are updating our safety COVID safety policies to a 3 tiered system, based on the CDC Community Risk Level of our area of Low, Medium, and High risk (taking into consideration risk levels in Berks, Lebanon, and Lancaster Counties). If there is a noticed increase in risk level, the determination will be made within the church following the same process as our snow cancellation policy.

When at “**Low Risk**” we will be going back to the following:

- (1) Mask wearing is optional for everyone regardless of vaccination status even while singing. Mask wearing is encouraged (not required) when unable to social distance, and mask wearing is recommended and encouraged (not required) by those who are not vaccinated, especially when singing or when not able to be socially distant.
- (2) Mask wearing will be required for adults in nursery if a child under 9 months old is present.
- (3) Brass and woodwind instruments are permitted without being masked.
- (4) Mask wearing will be required by all over the age of 2 for singing (and brass/woodwind) when we have a baptismal service for an unvaccinated infant or baptism of other persons who are unable to be vaccinated.
- (5) As the area in the chancel is small and as leaders strive to project outward toward the congregation, all those in the chancel who are speaking, singing, or playing a brass/woodwind instrument need to be either fully vaccinated or masked.
- (6) Children may be invited to the chancel area for the children’s message.
- (7) We will not be doing contact tracing, but will continue to take attendance as we did before the pandemic.
- (8) The section of pews closest to the piano will be marked for social distancing, the rest will not. Pews will continue to be numbered, in preparation of the possibility of moving to a higher risk level with contact tracing.
- (9) Hand sanitizer will remain available.
- (10) Masks will remain available.
- (11) HVAC fans will continue to be set to “on” at least a half hour before worship, and should be set to “on” for other meetings, events, activities within the church building. HVAC filters will continue to be replaced at appropriately regular intervals (every 2 to 3 months).
- (12) Being fully vaccinated will continue to be required for those who minister to vulnerable populations (i.e. anyone who is required to have CHYLD Worker Status is still required to be fully vaccinated). *Fully vaccinated continues to refer to those who have received the appropriate number of COVID vaccination shots.
- (13) We will continue to have virtual worship available through Live Stream, Facebook Live, and Live Phone Streaming. We may or may not continue with the Zoom option, which is the least used of our different options.
- (14) Water fountains will be enabled. Reusable water bottles are encouraged. Cups will be made available.
- (15) Masking continues to be required for those who are *not* vaccinated if: (a) providing worship leadership of: greeting/ushering, speaking or singing from the chancel, or (c) playing a woodwind or brass instrument; (b) if serving food/drink; or (c) praying one-on-one or other close proximity care/prayer/fellowship.
- (16) We will continue to have the offering plates in the rear of the sanctuary, due to the need to keep the St. Paul’s and Zion offerings separate.
- (17) Persons experiencing COVID symptoms are encouraged not to participate in in-person church activities.
- (18) Possible exposure guidelines continue.
- (19) The default setup for Miller Fellowship Hall will continue to be socially distant arrangement of tables, but other arrangements are permitted.
- (20) The obligation/expectation of regular worship attendance is now resuming, with the exception of those who are potentially symptomatic (as well as the other exceptions listed in the by-laws, including: homebound/shut-in, ill/infirm/ health issues, serving in mission or military abroad, etc). For those unable to participate in-person, the obligation/expectation of participating virtually continues, if able.

Beginning on Sunday, May 29, while our community is at a “**Moderate Risk**” level we will add the following precautions:

- (1) Masking while signing (or playing woodwind or brass instrument) will be required, for those over the age of 2 years old.
- (2) Unvaccinated people over the age of 4 years old are required to mask while in the building. When a vaccine becomes available for 3-4 year olds, this guideline will change to: “Unvaccinated people over the age of 2 years old are required to mask while in the building.” (Except while eating/drinking while seated at a socially distant table or when receiving communion).
- (3) Masking is required by all over the age of 2 years old when not able to be socially distant.
- (4) Masking is required by all over the age of 2 years old for serving food/drink to others.
- (5) The greeters/ushers will be doing contact tracing. Contact tracing is encouraged for all activities.
- (6) Pew seating will be in every other pew.
- (7) Choir will need to mask while in the choir loft (if not able to social distance from others in the chancel).
- (8) In-person worship obligation is temporarily suspended; however, virtual worship obligation continues.
- (9) Water fountains will be disabled (touchless bottle fillers will continue to be enabled).
- (10) The tables in the Miller Fellowship Hall should remain set for socially distant seating.
- (11) If youth come forward for the children’s sermon, they should sit socially distant.

When at a “**High Risk**” level we will add the following precautions:

- (1) Masking is required for all over the age of 2 years old, regardless of vaccination status, throughout worship and when unable to be socially distant. (Except for worship leaders in their appropriate socially distant seating).
- (2) Food/drink will not be served indoors. Meals will be take out only.
- (3) In addition to seating in every other pew, when sharing a pew, spacing between different households is to be observed.
- (4) Youth should remain in their pews for the children’s sermon.

By May 29, there will be signs on the entrance doors to inform participants at what level we are operating. The status will also be included on our website. Changes (and often current status) will also be communicated through our weekly *E-Newsletter*.

Our COVID safety policies can be found on our website. The above safety measures were published in the May newsletter, but will not be added to our website until after May 22, to avoid confusion about the policies. We are hoping that by giving you more advance noticed that our two congregations can more easily ease into this new three tiered system, and so everyone has a greater sense of what to expect in advance.

As always, as medical information changes, our COVID Safety Policies are subject to change.

If you have not yet received the COVID vaccine, please contact your primary medical provider to inquire if the vaccine is appropriate for you. If you are vaccinated, but have not yet received a booster, please contact your primary medical provider to inquire if a booster shot is appropriate for you.

Additional Reference Notations

1. Worship Obligation

Members should not feel obligated to worship in-person during the pandemic. Members not worshipping in person, should continue with their obligation of weekly worship by joining in one of our electronic formats. We will continue to offer YouTube Live Stream, Facebook Live, and Phone Stream.

2. Only Come If...

Only come if you are feeling healthy, do not have a fever, are not exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, are able to wear a cloth mask that covers your mouth and nose, are not at risk from an exposure of spreading COVID-19 to others, are not living with someone who is potential risk, and are willing and able to follow the safety guidelines.

3. Masks

Masks refer to a cloth mask that covers nose, mouth, and chin.

4. Social Distancing

Worshippers are encouraged to seat themselves socially distant from others. At least one section of sanctuary seating will be marked for social distancing (on the piano side of the sanctuary).

For special occasions, such as baptisms, funerals, etc a section of pews may be marked for family seating.

5. Entering/Exiting & Contact Tracing

Hand sanitizer will be available at entrances/exits for all activities, and everyone is encouraged to wash/sanitize their hands frequently.

Attendance for contact tracing will be conducted for worship, Sunday school, and youth group.

6. CHYLD Workers

For those who work with vulnerable populations we already require "CHYLD Worker Status" (including those who teach Sunday school, lead youth, help in the nursery, visit in the hospital and nursing homes, etc). All those who have "CHYLD Worker Status" are required to provide proof of vaccination to continue in that role.

7. Fully Vaccinated

a. Fully Vaccinated = those who have received two Pfizer, two Moderna, or one Johnson & Johnson COVID shot followed by a minimum of two weeks.

b. Those who are eligible to receive the booster shot are encouraged to consult with their primary care provider if the booster is appropriate for them.

c. Those who are CHYLD Workers, are encouraged to submit their booster record, in addition to the required vaccination record, for the future possibility of the booster record also becoming required.

8. Baptisms

We will give preferential opportunity for seating to the family of the baptized, and continue to with additional safety options and precautions to be coordinated with the Pastor and the family.

9. Weddings

During the pandemic, couples may be wed within the church building, and outdoor wedding ceremonies are welcome and encouraged. The Pastor may insist on the following of the regular worship safety policies or, in consultation and agreement with the couple, the Pastor may approve exceptions to the policy for the wedding ceremony. The Pastor is encouraged to have those exceptions affirmed by the Consistory when possible and practical to do so, and it is acknowledged that some of unexpected needs may arise during the rehearsal.

10. Funerals/Memorial Services

The COVID Guidelines for regular worship are to be followed for funeral and memorial services with the following additional considerations and exceptions:

- a. Ushers are required when community levels are Medium or High, but the role of usher may be fulfilled by the funeral home staff.
- b. Receiving Lines for Visitation/Viewing
 - i. An outdoor receiving line using a tarp/easy-up along the driveway at the fellowship hall is recommended, if desiring a receiving line. Outside is generally considered safer than inside.
 - ii. An indoor receiving line may be permitted in the Miller Fellowship Hall, by having individuals enter from the main doors of the hall, and exit through the kitchen. The Property Committee is to set up directional arrows for people to follow.
 - iii. There is not sufficient room for social distancing for a receiving line in the upstairs section of the building
 - iv. A designated receiving line, marked every ten feet for social distancing, should be set up by the Property Committee well in advance. (Ten feet rather than six feet, as often people will arrive as families). Using painter's tape, cones, or similar marker, a social distance boundary of at least eight feet (to give room for chairs) should be established for the family to be distant behind when receiving their guests. (The boundary is for the protection of the family, who may choose at their discretion how close to move towards guest, and guests should have ample room to back away for their own safety and comfort, so that no one feels trapped or backed into a corner).
- c. At the Pastor's discretion, members of the immediate family may use the lectern from which to speak if they choose to do so. If multiple people are speaking, a separate microphone at the moveable lectern in the lower chancel shall be used. Ushers shall wipe down the lectern between each person speaking. Individuals should NOT touch the microphone. Those speaking may removed their masks while doing so if: (1) they are fully vaccinated; and (2) if the family prefers that speaking individuals do so.
- d. Family and friends may be seated closer together, if the next of kin chooses to do so; however, social distancing even among close family is still recommended. The sections of pews near the piano must allow for socially distant seating.
- e. With advance notice, live streaming might also be a possibility for funeral/memorial services, as well as closed circuit viewing in the Miller Fellowship Hall and the old social hall.

11. If Possible Exposure

- a. The Consistory will seek to keep this updated based on the latest CDC Guidelines
- b. Close Contact = Someone who was less than 6 feet away from an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period. Our sanctuary seating is separated by 5 feet of spacing; as such, if persons are sitting behind, in-front, or next to you, per CDC Guidelines, that would be a close contact exposure if tested positive.
 - i. For those sitting in the sanctuary at a greater distance, that is currently not considered a close contact exposure.
 - ii. An example of "cumulative total" = For those working in the kitchen, if on a Thursday afternoon, you are in the kitchen three times for five minutes each, and someone else who was in the kitchen later tests positive, that is a cumulative total of 15 minutes within 24 hours, and that is considered close contact.
- c. If you had "close contact" to someone who tested positive, whether at St. Paul's UCC or in another setting...
 - i. If *NOT* fully vaccinated.

You may not participate in any activity at or with St. Paul's UCC for at least the next 14 days, unless you receive a negative COVID test that was taken at least 5 days after the possible exposure *and* you are not showing symptoms.

The CDC states that you should quarantine for 14 days in general after the last exposure to that person, except if negative test 5-7 days after close contact and not showing symptoms.
 - ii. If *Fully Vaccinated*

You may continue to participate in activities with St. Paul's UCC if you are not showing any symptoms of COVID-19.

However, you must also:

 - (1) Wear a mask whenever you are in the church building for 14 days following exposure or until you receive a negative test result, as you should for any public indoor activity during that 14 day period.
 - (2) You are encouraged to get tested 5-7 days after close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
 - (3) The CDC guidelines state that you should get tested and isolate immediately if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- d. Day of exposure = day number 0.

If you have a potential exposure on a Sunday, your 14 days are up on the Monday two weeks later.

12. Temporary Closures

If there was a COVID-19 positive individual in the building, those sections will be closed for at least 24 hours before cleaning (preferably at least 72 hours).

13. Usher Training

In addition to the usher training for calling first responders, including law enforcement, if worshipers are not following the guidelines and/or the instructions of the ushers, the Pastor has the full support of the Consistory to decline to begin a worship service and/or to conclude any worship service early at any point for safety, including the safety of appropriate social distancing; however, the Consistory is not holding the Pastor as responsible for ensuring that worshipers properly follow social distancing, mask wearing, and church guidelines.

14. Information

Our COVID Safety information will be available in print form for those coming to the building for worship and posted on our website at: <http://www.sprucc.org/news-a-events/news.html#COVID19Precautions>, to help ensure that all are aware of the guidelines.

**Please note that this plan is subject to change as more information becomes available and changes are happening with respect to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Dated: *May 29, 2022*