A Faithful Response to COVID-19: Resources and Guidance for Decision-Making

March 10, 2022

We know these times continue to be difficult, confusing, and sometimes frustrating. There are persistent questions about what resources are legitimate or true. As the UCC Wellness Ministries Network, our mission is to *inspire, enable, and empower everyone to experience wellness throughout their lives.* We know that the needs of congregations and communities vary throughout the nation. The information offered here is from recognized, reliable resources. Because the COVID-19 pandemic is changing quickly, we encourage you to check these sites frequently for updated information.

We offer these resources for use as you prayerfully discern what is safest and healthiest for you and your congregation. As we continue together on this journey, information may change. We suggest you check sites for their current information and resources. You can contact us directly at wellnessministries@ucc.org and also sign up for our newsletter here.

CHURCH OPERATIONS AND WORSHIP

- **In Person Worship**
  - The key points listed in the CDC guidance include:
    - Vaccination when eligible
    - Universal masking meaning everyone age 2 and older wears a mask in a building whether they are vaccinated or not.
    - Follow CDC quarantine and isolation guidance.
    - Physical distancing of at least 6 feet
    - Screening for symptoms, testing,
    - Ventilation
    - Handwashing
    - Contact tracing
    - Cleaning and disinfecting
    - STAY HOME WHEN SICK - *everyone*

- **Singing**
  - Sing! The Center for Congregational Song
  - Journal of the American Medical Association, COVID-19 Precautions Help Make Music That's Beautiful and Safe (published October 14, 2021)
  - Hymn: In the Midst of New Dimensions available in The New Century Hymnal, page 391

- **Sermons and Prayers:** There are sermons and prayers on the internet. Use search words: COVID, COVID Sermons, COVID Prayers, COVID Hymns

- **Childcare/Sunday School**
  - Look to your school district or the state department of education for guidance
  - [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K- 12 Schools. Updated Jan. 13, 2022](#)

- **Vaccine Requirements**
  - Can we require staff to have a vaccine, or can churches require a vaccine for entry?
    - https://www.ucc.org/can-churches-require-covid-19-vaccinations by Heather Kimmel
    - The Insurance board provides this [Frequently Asked Question document](#).

- **What to do if someone tests positive**
  - When Someone in Worship Tests Positive for COVID-19: https://www.sneucc.org/blogdetail/when-someone-in-worship-tests-positive-for-covid-19-15803642

- **Mental Health Resources**
  - **United Church of Christ (UCC)**
    - [Recovering Hope Mental Health Resources](#)
    - [Resources for Mental Health and Wellness](#)
    - [UCC Mental Health Network](#)
    - [UCC Harm Reduction & Overdose Prevention](#)
  - **Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Resources**
    - [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:](#) 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
    - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [National Helpline](#): 1-800-662 HELP (4357)
    - [SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline](#): 1-800-985-5990
    - [Mental Health Crisis Intervention Services/ Mobile Crisis CT](#): 211
    - [Suicide Prevention Resource Center: COVID-19](#)
    - Nationa**l** Alliance on Mental Health [NAMI: Navigating a Mental Health Crisis](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) and [Al-Anon](#) for friends and family of alcoholics
- [Domestic Violence Hotline](#)
- [UCC Disaster Ministries](#)

INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH CONGREGANTS
- **Testing**
  - **Order four free test kits per household online at:**
    - https://www.covidtests.gov/

- ■ https://special.usps.com/testkits
  - ■ 1-800-232-0233

- **Quarantine and Isolation** Updated Jan. 27, 2022. There is a simple chart to follow to advise when to quarantine and when to isolate. Quarantine if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Stay away from others. If you are:

  - ○ **Not fully vaccinated:** stay home for 5 full days and wear a mask if you are around others in your home. Get tested at least 5 days after the close contact. Continue to watch for symptoms for at least 10 days after the date of exposure. Wear a mask around others at home and in public for 10 full days. If you develop symptoms, then isolate and get tested. Wear a mask around others and stay home until you get the results.
  - ○ **Fully Vaccinated** or tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days then you do not have to stay home if you do not have symptoms. Get tested 5 days after the close contact. Monitor for symptoms and wear a well fitted mask for 10 days when around others at home or in public. If symptoms develop, isolate, and get tested, avoid travel and keep away from people who are at high risk of illness.
  - ○ **Isolate** if you are sick or test positive for COVID-19 even if you do not have symptoms.

- **Vaccines**
  - ○ The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends everyone ages 5 years and older get a COVID-19 vaccine **t**o help protect against COVID-19. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the one recommended for children ages 5-11 and teens ages 11-17.
  - ○ Vaccination Record and Vaccination Card information

- **Vaccine Boosters**
  - ○ CDC Get your booster shot: Updated January 7, 2022. Bring your COVID-19 vaccine card with you.
  - ○ **Pfizer** - everyone over 18 years of age can get a booster if it has been 5 months since the second dose of Pfizer. You can choose Pfizer or Moderna if over age 18, ages 12-17 get the Pfizer booster shot.
  - ○ **Moderna -** Adults 18 and older are eligible for a booster dose 5 months after completing the second dose. You may choose Pfizer or Moderna.
  - ○ **Johnson & Johnson's Janssen –** Adults 18 and older are eligible for a booster dose at least 2 months after the first dose. Pfizer or Moderna are recommended.

- **Masking Updates**
  - ○ CDC Omicron Variant: What you Need to Know
  - ○ CDC Recent changes (January 28, 2022) in Mask recommendations
  - ○ "CDC continues to recommend wearing a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high community transmission, regardless of vaccination status."

NATIONAL RESOURCES
- **Occupational and Health Administration** OSHA
- **Centers for Disease Control** CDC

- **Reliable sources for tracking data**
  - COVID Act Now
  - CDC Data Tracker COVID-19 Integrated County View add new link

RESOURCES FROM FAITH GROUPS

- **United Church of Christ (UCC)**
  - A resource developed by UCC national staff for congregations early in pandemic (2020); page 3 provides information regarding the minimal threshold for convening in-person worship again.
  - Local Conference Resources:

Southern New England Conference Guidance for Church Offices: Resources for Decision Making and Pandemic Progress, Persistence and Patience

  - ■
  - ■ Missouri Mid-South conference Suggested Phased Reopening Plan for Churches (dated May 2020); pages 3 and 4 have information that helps create flexibility in dealing with the ongoing changing conditions and good points for reopening church.
  - United Church Of Christ Insurance Board UCC Insurance Board

- **Wisconsin Council of Churches**
  - Wisconsin Council of Churches: Returning to Church 3.0

- **Unitarian Universalism**
  - COVID-19 Gathering Guidance Responding to Emerging Variants of Concern January 5, 2022

- **Disciples of Christ**
  - https://disciples.org/dns/disciples-and-covid-19/

OTHER RESOURCES:

Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation :

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html

https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/indoor-air-and-coronavirus-covid-19

COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality: Best Practices for Houses of Worship (3/10/21) Video from Mass. Interfaith Power & Light. Curt Freedman, Professional Engineer and adjunct professor at Western New England University provides an overview of the factors houses of worship should consider as they plan to resume in-person worship. How to calculate capacity of the sanctuary, improving ventilation, use of filters and air purifiers and other topics.