



## Re-Gathering Team - Covid Update April 1, 2022

Your Covid Team (comprised of representatives chosen by Deacons, Personnel, Staff, Worship and Buildings and Grounds) continues to meet *weekly* to assess our response to the Covid pandemic.

### 1) **Where we are:**

- a. Our phased re-opening plan used the metrics of percent positivity, case numbers, and vaccination rates as its primary guides. Because of the rise of home testing, case numbers and positivity rates are no longer recommended as the sole reliable metric for measuring community spread.
- b. Instead, we are following the CDC and State guidance to also look at hospitalizations as a reliable metric of disease severity.
- c. As of today, the rate of hospitalizations is similar to the numbers we were seeing in September, before the spread of the Delta variant. The current variants appear to cause less severe disease in the general population than earlier variants.

### 2) **Updates to First Church current Covid policies and guidelines:**

- a. Sunday Worship: Based on our masking policies, and the purchase of several air purifiers, First Church has removed its physical distancing requirements while in the building. Areas under the balconies and the balconies themselves will continue to be reserved for those who need to observe physical distancing, in order to facilitate attendance of those who might be immunocompromised.
- b. We will continue to offer livestreaming of the services and a Zoom option for all team meetings, but we do encourage those who are able, to return to worship in the physical sanctuary.
- c. Similarly, teams and committees are able to resume in person, as long as a viable zoom option is offered for those who wish. Activities after worship (such as peace crane folding!) are able to resume - although we will not be serving refreshments, yet.
- d. The capacity in the Possibility Shop has been raised to 15 persons at a time.
- e. Choir, an activity that was previously considered too high-risk has resumed!
- f. In order to accommodate our renters with different guidelines, renters have been notified they are able to make the choice to remove their masks while in their designated rental areas (chapel, dining room, etc.). Renters are to remain masked at all times while in common spaces (hallways, bathrooms, etc.) in order to facilitate multiple activities in the building at once.
- g. We continue to ask that anyone who has been in a high-risk environment, or had a known covid exposure, have a negative rapid test before attending an event at church, or attend virtually.

### 3) **Guiding Principles and Background:**

- a. Research has shown that vaccinations are the best way to reduce disease severity and spread. We continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated *and* boosted. Research has shown that these vaccines, however, may lack efficacy for immunocompromised, high-risk individuals.
- b. [Guidance from the state continues to be to mask when around vulnerable or immunocompromised individuals.](#) (Click for reference link)
- c. As the body of Christ, we affirm it as our responsibility to care for all in our congregation, and as such, with our older population and the presence of immune-compromised congregation and staff, we are continuing to look to the guidelines for public settings like [medical facilities](#) and [public transportation](#).
- d. There is currently no vaccine approved for children under 5, and this will not change before Easter. (But it is coming!)
- e. Additionally, our policies currently align with many other similar facilities, like the Flynn Center.

As aforementioned, we continue to meet weekly to ensure our policies are in line with current trends and realities. We do anticipate other changes will be forthcoming, particularly as the weather warms. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact members of the Covid Response Team.

In Faith, The Covid Response Team: *Doug Viehmann, Bob McKearin, Hilah Clarke, Ann Vivian, Caroline Catlin, and Elissa Johnk*