



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Rev. Jeffrey Hubers, Senior Minister

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Blessings in the Name of the Jesus:

We rejoice in this Season of Pentecost, the sharing of God's life-giving Spirit, that the vaccination process is having such a positive impact on COVID cases. The recent announcements by both the CDC and State of Michigan have been reviewed by the Re-Opening Committee, and it is with much joy that we are announcing a return to former practices of worship that we have not experienced since *before* the pandemic. We know the virus is still ongoing, but the level of safety afforded by vaccinations allows for a more comfortable and relatively "normal" experience.

The next page has the complete list of revised protocols, but the main thing to remember now is that we no longer ask for mask-wearing by those who are fully vaccinated. Those who have not yet been or unable to be fully vaccinated should continue wearing their masks while indoors. We'll continue to encourage distancing, but again, for those who are vaccinated such practices are unnecessary. We also respect anyone's decision to continue wearing their masks, even if vaccinated, as it is an added layer of defense and sign of love for others.

We are proceeding forward on an honor-system. No vaccination cards will be required, as we understand everyone's personal choice in receiving doses – but church leadership has followed the advice of health and science professionals, and the effectiveness of the vaccine is what allows this relaxation of protocol. If you are not vaccinated, we stress again how vital it is for you to continue wearing your mask while indoors or in close proximity with others.

All services will continue to be live-streamed and available online, but our building is now fully open for usage. However, we ask for adherence to our safety protocols as well as patience and respect if those guidelines change due to virus numbers and recommendations from state and federal authorities. With summer approaching, church leadership is encouraging as much outdoor activity as possible for gatherings and events, as the open-air environment is still the best protection available, beyond vaccinations and masks.

We know we are not yet out of this pandemic, but our current level of comfort and safety as a community has not been experienced since this all began. For that, we give God thanks, and pray for the season ahead. May the grace of Jesus Christ abide with us all and give us strength to proceed together in faith.

- Rev. Jeffrey Hubers & Church Council

Revised Protocols for In-Person, Indoors Services

Before you come to Sunday worship:

- If you feel ill, have a fever, cough, or other symptoms, consider staying home and joining online.

Entering the building for Sunday worship:

- Doors #1 & 3 will be open for attenders (both doors locked from 10:40-11:30 a.m.)
- Those who are fully vaccinated no longer need to wear a mask indoors.
 - Those who are not vaccinated, we ask you to wear a mask for your own safety
 - Mask-wearing will be respected by any who either need or wish to use them
- You may make your way to seating of your own choice.
 - Only those sharing the same bubble and/or fully vaccinated should be seated together
 - Ushers will be on hand to direct guests to available seating
 - Ushers will help monitor appropriate spacing and capacity for each row
- Fellowship hour will take place outdoors when weather enables. Otherwise, fellowship hour will take place in the fellowship hall to allow for greater spacing.

During Sunday worship:

- The Nursery is open for any who wish to use it, but no attendant will be on hand.
- Please follow prompts either listed in the bulletin or directed by worship leaders and ushers.

For the most part, our Sunday worship experience and other building-use will return to pre-pandemic models. Following CDC and state guidelines, fully vaccinated people have the greatest level of protection from contracting and transmitting the virus, thus masks and distancing measures are not necessary for those individuals. Those risks remain high for people who have not been vaccinated, and so masks and distancing should be practiced for their own safety. Above all, we continue to stress the centrality of Jesus' self-giving love and putting the needs of others before ourselves. Whatever our protocols, remember that as a community we are called to treat one another with compassion, patience, and grace.