

Protocols and Guidelines for the re-opening of The First Church in Oberlin, UCC

As we prepare to welcome friends back into the First Church building, the health and safety of our community is the prime concern. The protocols listed below have been created in accordance with the Lorain County Board of Health and denominational guidelines, in these specific areas:

- Worship
- Childcare and Sunday School
- Youth group and other outdoor gatherings
- Church Committee meetings
- Group gatherings other than Committee gatherings
- Church Tours

COVID GUIDELINES FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP

*I was glad when they said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'* Psalm 122:1

We are looking forward with joy to the day when we can welcome our congregation back to in-person worship. We want to make that experience as pleasant and safe as possible for everyone involved. To that end, we are creating these COVID guidelines for in-person worship:

- We will be providing a virtual worship experience on Facebook Live for those who do not attend in person. If you are not feeling well, please stay home and join the service virtually.
- We encourage all people attending to be vaccinated if they are eligible.
- Masks although not required are strongly encouraged:
 - As a faith statement of extravagant welcome
 - To protect those ineligible to be vaccinated
 - To illustrate we stand with the most vulnerable in our midst
 - To illustrate that First Church is a judgement-free zone
 - To make everyone feel safe and comfortable
 - To keep worship leaders safe when they unmask while presenting
- We recognize that people currently have different physical distances at which they feel comfortable. Please stay at least 6 feet away from others who are not members of your household, unless you mutually agree to be closer.
- To enable adequate physical distancing the balcony will be open for seating.
- Participants should wash and/or sanitize their hands upon arrival in the facility.
- We will have childcare available during the service. Please refer to our childcare protocols for further information.
- We will be opening the windows and turning on fans whenever possible. **Please be aware that as temperatures drop, windows in the Meeting House will need to be closed and we will need to rely on the ceiling fans for air circulation during worship.**
- Worship leaders may unmask when presenting, if they feel comfortable doing so.
- Please stay in your pew for the Passing of the Peace.
- Children will be asked to stay with their families during the Message for All Ages.
- We are asking the congregation to sing with their masks on during the hymns.
- **There will be no choral singing at this time.**
- Communion will be handled in a safe manner. Participation is optional.
- **Please consider shifting to a N95 or KN95 mask. At a minimum be sure to use a multi-layered cloth masks. Better still, consider double-masking.**
- **We are asking that you not linger in the hallways as you enter and leave worship. We all long for moments of fellowship, however brief, but at this time it is important to minimize in-person social interaction with those outside one's own household.**

We look forward to the day when some of these rules can be relaxed: for now, we ask your patience as we live through the gradual lifting of restrictions. These guidelines were created with the health of our community as our priority. They are in accordance with the Lorain County Board of Health and denominational guidelines and are subject to modification. Thanks for your support and your understanding.

1.6.2022

COVID GUIDELINES FOR CHILDCARE AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

Matthew 19:13-14: *Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."*

We are looking forward with joy to the day when we can welcome all people back to church - including our children. We want to make that experience as pleasant and safe as possible for everyone involved. To that end, we are creating these COVID guidelines for our childcare program:

- We will maintain a lower Staff/child ratio of 1:9 in Room 2 (ages 3+), and 1:6 in Room 1 (ages 0-2).
- We have purchased a Germicidal UV and HEPA air filter for Room 1, where we will have children ages 0-2 (who should not wear masks).
- We will be opening windows whenever possible for better ventilation.
- We will be asking staff and children to frequently wash hands, and use hand sanitizer frequently as well.
- Our wooden and cloth toys and play equipment have been placed in storage, since they have porous surfaces.
- All toys that are out in the childcare rooms will be washed weekly.
- Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, tables, and sink faucets will be cleaned between each use of the childcare rooms.
- We will provide each Childcare and Sunday School child with their own box of supplies, and their own labeled chair. The same box of supplies will be used for Children's Church if needed.
- We will minimize sharing of toys, and toys will not travel between rooms during a childcare session.
- Any mouthed toy will be placed in a bin of soapy water on a high shelf, then washed and disinfected before it is returned to use.

We also need your help to keep everyone safe. We ask that all families observe the following rules when in the childcare area:

- We ask that everyone over 2 years of age wear a face mask, unless there is a medical or developmental reason not to do so. Face shields must be worn by those over 2 years of age who cannot wear masks.
- Please wash your hands when you enter the childcare rooms.
- There will be a sign-in table in the childcare area, with a symptom questionnaire and temperature check. If someone in your family is feeling ill, please stay home until you have recovered.
- Children will be grouped in cohorts where possible: if your child is already podded with another family's children, please let us know. We will ask children to keep a distance of 3 feet or more from others during class as much as possible, unless they are in the same family unit or their families are podded together.
- If you anticipate your child needing a change of clothes, please bring that in a labeled backpack, which will be hung in the hallway outside Room 2.
- We will ask during check-in about how you would like us to handle diapering. If you would like to diaper your child yourself, we will text you if that is necessary. If you would like our staff to diaper your child, they will be required to wear gloves, and wash their hands before and after diapering.
- No food or drink will be allowed in the childcare rooms except milk/formula. If you anticipate your child needing a bottle, please bring it in a labeled diaper bag or backpack, which will be hung in the hallway outside Room 2. We will ask during check-in about how you would like us to handle feeding. If you would like to feed your child yourself, we will text you if that is necessary. Staff will wash hands before and after feeding.

We look forward to the day when some of these rules can be relaxed: for now, we ask your patience as we live through the gradual lifting of restrictions. These guidelines were created with the health of our community as our priority. They are in accordance with the Lorain County Board of Health and are subject to modification. Thanks for your support and your understanding.

4.18.2021

COVID GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS (on and off site)

We recognize that outside gatherings are currently safest - particularly for those of us who are currently ineligible to be vaccinated. In order to maximize everyone's safety - particularly where children are involved - we are asking that people observe the following guidelines:

- If you are fully vaccinated you need not wear a mask but if you are unvaccinated you are strongly encouraged to wear a mask.
- Please stay 6 feet apart from people who are not members of your household unless families mutually agree to be closer.
- The church will not be sponsoring carpooling to offsite events at this time. If you are comfortable sharing transportation with another household, you are free to arrange that on your own.
- The church will not be providing food and drink at this time. Please plan accordingly.

5.23.21

COVID GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The following guidelines were created with the health of our community as our priority. These are in accordance with the Lorain County Board of Health and are subject to modification.

- **Church committees will now need to resume meeting exclusively via Zoom. We will reevaluate for February 2022. If the Reopening Task Group and Executive Council deem it is safe to return to in-person committee meetings, the following protocols and guidelines will continue to be in place.**
- Face coverings are to be worn at all times
- Individual should maintain 6 ft. physical distance (except household units)
- Please open windows and turn on “air movers”, when available. This is for air circulation, so please try and do this even if it is cold outside
- Rooms must be reserved in advance; No walk-up use of spaces
- Please sign in with names of participants
- Participants should hand sanitize upon arrival in the facility
- If you are not feeling well, attend remotely (i.e., via Zoom)
- Participants should not exceed the maximum posted COVID occupancy of each meeting space
- There are to be no “buffet” or “shared serving container” type snacks for the foreseeable future
- Meetings must be made available via Zoom
- Gatherings of more than 10 people are discouraged
- Committee members are responsible for wiping down any touched surfaces upon leaving the room (tables, arms of chairs, door knobs, light switch, temp controls, restrooms, etc.)
- Inviting guests other than committee members should be limited (guests may also join by Zoom)
- Please remember to close windows and turn off “air movers” before leaving the building

1.6.22

COVID GUIDELINES FOR GROUP GATHERINGS OTHER THAN COMMITTEE GATHERINGS

12 Step Groups in Fellowship Hall until further notice

The following guidelines were created with the health of our community as our priority. These are in accordance with the Lorain County Board of Health and are subject to modification. In order to use First Church facilities for meetings, the following guidelines must be followed:

- Face coverings are to be worn at all times
- Individuals should maintain 6 ft. physical distance (except household units)
- Please open windows and turn on “air movers”, when available. This is for air circulation, so please try and do this even if it is cold outside
- Rooms must be reserved in advance; No walk-up use of spaces
- Please contain your meeting to the assigned space (restrooms are available)
- Participants should hand sanitize upon arrival in the facility
- If you are not feeling well, please stay home
- Participants should not exceed the maximum posted COVID occupancy of each meeting space
- Shared food/beverage should not be made available. Please bring your own individual, sealed food/beverage container. If you are bringing food/beverage for a group, all items have to be sealed and individually packaged.
- Leaders are responsible for wiping down any touched surfaces upon leaving the room (tables, arms of chairs, door knobs, light switch, temp controls, restrooms, etc.)
- Please remember to close windows and turn off “air movers” before leaving the building

8.19.21

COVID GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH TOURS

The following guidelines were created with the health of our community as our priority. These are in accordance with the Lorain County Board of Health and are subject to modification.

- Face coverings are to be worn at all times
- Individuals should maintain 6 ft physical distance (except household units)
- Tour reservations are required
- Participants should hand sanitize upon arrival in the facility
- If you are not feeling well please reschedule your tour for another time
- Please sign in with names of tour guide and participants
- Tours are open to First Church congregants only: individuals or household units.
- Group must remain with the guide except for optional time for reflection at the conclusion of the tour
- Tours will be limited to the Meeting House, JFO Room, and Fellowship Hall, and viewing but not entry into other designated spaces
- Tour guides are responsible for wiping down any touched surfaces upon completion of the tour (door knobs, push plates, restrooms, etc...)

3-28-21