

## ***Covid Protocols and Guidelines for The First Church in Oberlin, UCC***

As we continue to welcome friends 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

## 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 continue to enjoy having our congregation back to in-person worship. As we move into the post-pandemic period, we want to ensure that experience is as pleasant and safe as possible for everyone involved. To that end, we are creating these COVID guidelines for in-person worship:

- We will continue to provide 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 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
- 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.
- Please be sensitive to the physical distancing needs of those around you and ask before sitting within 6' of another parishioner.
- To offer additional physical distancing the balcony will be open for seating.
- 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 remain in your pew for the Passing of the Peace.
- Children will be asked to stay with their families during the Message for Our Youth.
- We are asking the congregation to sing with their masks on during the hymns.
- Communion will be handled in a safe manner. Participation is optional.

We ask your patience as we navigate 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.

3.2.2022

## 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.”*

As we 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 cloth toys and some of our wooden play equipment have been placed in storage, since they have porous surfaces.
- All toys that are out in the childcare rooms will be washed monthly.
- Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, tables, and sink faucets will be cleaned between each use of the childcare rooms.
- 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 will provide each Childcare and Sunday School child with their own box of supplies. 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.

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.
- 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.
- 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 ask your patience as we navigate 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.

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## **COVID GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS (on and off site)**

We recognize that outside gatherings are currently safest - particularly for those who are 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 encouraged to wear a mask.
- We recognize that people currently have different physical distances at which they feel comfortable. Please respect other's preferences and comfort level.
- 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.

3.2.22

## **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 may meet either virtually or in person, at the discretion of the committee members.
- Face coverings are encouraged
- Please be sensitive to the physical distancing needs of those around you and ask before sitting within 6' of another committee member.
- 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
- If you are not feeling well, please remain at home
- Participants should not exceed the maximum posted COVID occupancy of each meeting space
- Please remember to close windows and turn off “air movers” before leaving the building

3.2.22

## **COVID GUIDELINES FOR GROUP GATHERINGS OTHER THAN COMMITTEE GATHERINGS**

### **12 Step & other support groups in larger rooms 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
- We recognize that people currently have different physical distances at which they feel comfortable. Please respect other's preferences and comfort level.
- 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)
- If you are not feeling well, please stay home
- Participants should not exceed the maximum posted COVID occupancy of each meeting space
- Please remember to close windows and turn off "air movers" before leaving the building

3.2.22