



March 23, 2021

The COVID-19 Rapid Response Team wants you to have these important updates. Please read this carefully and take time to sit with this information.

As of March 15, Lane County has moved into the “Moderate” Risk Category with plans to enter the “Lower” Risk Category on March 26. Learn more about what this means for the whole county here: <https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le3461.pdf>

Equally encouraging are the numbers of people who are getting vaccinated. You can read more here: <https://ourworldindata.org/us-states-vaccinations>

We are so glad so many of you are eligible now to get vaccinated and that many of you have taken an opportunity to do so. You are doing all you can to keep yourself and others safe.

What does this mean for First Christian Church Eugene?

At our last communication to the Board of Directors and Congregation, we stated a planned reopening might be an available option for us in June 2021; we are beginning our phased implementations now and we are cautiously optimistic that virus rates will remain low so that we can begin to increase our safe building use.

Right now the risks include that not everyone in our congregation has been vaccinated or has had the opportunity, and may not for some time. This includes your pastoral staff and all essential employees. Also we have not budgeted for full reopening costs in our first 6 months of budget. So we must be careful in our reopening strategy to make sure we are keeping our spaces safe for our unvaccinated employees while upholding our value of radical hospitality.

In our church's discernment about reopening buildings (for worship, mission, or other gatherings), in addition to questions like, "How can we do this safely?" we are asking things like, “who is being excluded by an in-person church gathering right now?”

Some might suggest that we gather only the fully vaccinated folks and let them in for church events. How would we know? The church cannot ask you to disclose your private health information and we will not ask. As good as it would feel to meet with those folk (and yes, it would feel good,) how would it feel knowing there are people at home longing to be a part of those experiences but who can't because of access and other equity issues? We are committed to our vision of welcoming all into our spaces.

We are also still learning about this virus, and we remain concerned about variants and outbreaks once social gatherings resume. The current CDC guidance for gatherings in public remains the same: masked and socially distanced.

The Covid-19 Rapid Response Team encourages everyone to talk with their doctor about getting the vaccine and to learn if it is a good decision for you. Your church cannot require anyone to get a vaccine, and we understand that it's not widely available right now. If you would like to pre-register for the vaccine, we have learned you may do so by following this link: tinyurl.com/u8baxkua

If you would like to learn more about the vaccine, we recommend talking with your doctor and consulting the following articles:

<https://tinyurl.com/3nhdyrem>

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/january-web-only/church-reopening-vaccine-coronavirus-covid-advice.html>

INCREASING BUILDING USE

Since January 2021 we have helped the Interfaith Food Hub transition to St. Mary's Episcopal. We do have renters who utilize the building and more who plan to return as we re-open further. When considering how we use the building we must consider the full impact of each person/group and their use of the building.

In late March 2021 we will upgrade the ventilation system in Grace Chapel to be optimal for small group gatherings. The Sanctuary ventilation will also be addressed at this time but there are roof repairs also required in this area. We appreciate Admin and Property's diligent efforts to get the appropriate repairs and that these have taken a longer than average time due to the constraints all over the globe.

CRRT is now preparing to increase the number of hours the office staff occupies the building, utilizing special rooms within the church to record pieces for our online productions, increasing volunteer access to assist with critical systems (Admin, Membership, Communications, Outreach) as we prepare key spaces for safe gathering.

Admin & Personnel are preparing budgetary projections to identify how much increase in the budget is required in order to support our increased custodial needs within the required covid-19 protocols for re-opening. Read about these protocols with us here:

<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

tinyurl.com/cr7445uk - this is a link to cdc sanitation guidelines for covid

While building usage preference is currently given to community ministry outreach programs, essential administrative teams, and maintenance projects, the FCC Historian has begun work in the History Room with weekly hours, and Worship Leaders and Pastors also

have regular hours weekly. They take turns because of the impact of everyone using the building at once.

OUR GOALS

With continued risk status at *Low*, ***we will begin to utilize Grace Chapel*** and other identified well ventilated spaces for small group gatherings, contemplative meditation, or other activities, at Jerri and April's leading.

Registration for such events will be required and capacity at indoor events will be limited, based on the room's capacity in keeping with current cdc guidelines.

We are further recommending to the Board of Directors that:

Sunday Worship remains an online activity through July 2021. We encourage the worship team to develop a Church in the Park Sunday, to help us practice gathering in a large group for outdoor worship. But for the time being, we honor the work and effort the worship and production team are putting into our current Sunday gathering and we can phase our return to in person worship as well. Further we encourage the Worship & Spiritual Formation Teams to plan for outdoor rituals, gatherings, and events on times outside of Sunday morning.

Church committees continue to do their work through zoom as much as possible and to not request building space for committee meetings. This reduces the need for masked gatherings, it creates an efficient use of leaders time and reduces the pressure on gathering inside the church, allowing for essential work that must be done on site. Considerations in the next quarter should be made to, with the use of memorial funds, the purchase of ipads or other digital type books to allow church members without tech to learn to use them and stay connected. Church committees who are unable to meet over zoom should speak with Jerri & April.

Pastors Jerri and April, the Board of Elders, and Spiritual Formation Groups meet outdoors, or over zoom, as much as possible, through Summer 2021. Planned outdoor events need appropriate contingency plans for poor weather with either back up locations or a virtual alternative.

Individuals are needed to step forward to become trained Compliance Ambassadors of the church, with the responsibility of being present at ministry programs to monitor volunteers and ensure COVID-19 guidelines are respected and followed. This is a serious role and training is provided, but an assertive yet kind personality is required. As

we work toward a shared worship gathering experience, we will need more members to share in this role, fully understanding and taking a shared responsibility in keeping all members and guests safely gathered. Look for ways to sign up for this important volunteer role next week.

As always we welcome your questions and concerns, your contributions toward the safe reopening of First Christian Church. We look forward to hearing from you and we thank you for taking the time to read this important update.

With gratefulness for the ministries we share,

CRRT Team

Amy Metzger, Congregational Co-Moderator
Sandra Cole, Executive Ministry Team
Peter Ruffier, Administrative Ministry Team
Conrad Tjemsland, Community Ministry Team
Yvette Diggs, Operations Administrator
Rev. Jerri Handy, Co-Pastor
Rev. April Oristano, Co-Pastor