

UCC Regathering Plan

Overview

The UCC Regathering Task Force proposes a gradual process of resuming in-person activities guided by information about the risk of COVID-19 infection in the communities surrounding UCC. Smaller, non-public events will resume in-person meetings first. Large, public gatherings will resume last. Outdoor events are less risky than indoor events and may resume first.

Masks will be required for all indoor events **until children can be vaccinated**. An exception to the mask requirement may be possible for small or medium sized non-public events if all attendees agree ahead of time.

If the metrics indicate risk level is low, the **first in-person worship service** will be held in Sanctuary C on Sunday, September 12, at 10am. The specific logistics for the service are under development and may involve some occupancy restrictions. Remote access to worship will be available.

Policies and procedures for resuming full **religious education (RE)** and **music programming** (including choir rehearsals and singing in worship) are under development with key staff.

Starting in mid-July, we suggest that small (fewer than 10 people) events can be held both outside and inside. Medium (10-25 people) events can be held outside.

Reservations can be made now for events in August and September that meet certain criteria as outlined in this document.

Guiding Principles

In all matters of public health, **UCC will prioritize protecting and providing for the most vulnerable in our community**. We recognize that children under 12 are not eligible for vaccination and that some members of the community may be immuno-compromised. We also recognize that isolation is a public health concern and is detrimental to some members of our congregation. At a minimum, UCC will follow all restrictions and guidelines from government authorities and set by OBIC.

The task force's approach to understanding the risk of COVID-19 transmission is based in science. The current scientific consensus is that the primary risk of contracting COVID-19 is from airborne transmission of the virus, not from surfaces. Masks do help prevent transmission. The risk of transmission outdoors is low. Risk of transmission indoors is higher. Crowded spaces indoors with poor ventilation are highest risk. Singing or yelling are higher risk activities.

The following ground rules* will guide the regathering process:

In gathering together, we promise to:

- Gain consent before touching / hugging others.
- Wear masks in shared spaces until vaccines are available to all children.
- Find ways to be inclusive of adults who cannot be vaccinated.
- Give and accept reminders of these ground rules gracefully.
- Prioritize the safety of the whole community over our own sense of what is safe for ourselves.
- Take seriously the obligation to think about the safety of the whole before our own sense of what is safe for ourselves.
- Assume good intentions, but also accept that policies and these ground rules will guide our actions.
- Respect the authority of the people making policies.
- Not attend in person gatherings if we are not feeling well, or if not vaccinated and have been exposed to Covid-19.

* developed by Carol Gay, UU Congregation of Cleveland and adopted by the UUCU Regathering Task Force

Proposed process for resuming in-person activities once risk level is low

The current (early July 2021) risk level in Howard County and most of the surrounding counties on all metrics is low; therefore, we recommend:

Starting mid-July:

- Outdoor small and medium non-public events may take place immediately.
- Indoor small non-public events may take place immediately.

Reservations may be placed now for August events that are:

- Outdoor large non-public
- Indoor medium non-public

Reservations may be placed now for September events that are:

- Small and medium public events, with details to be discussed with staff
- Indoor large non-public with details to be discussed with staff

Overall principles for regathering

1. Start with the easy events

- Non-public before public events
- Small before large events

2. Move slowly

- Start small, announce tentative schedule for bigger events

3. Communicate clearly

- Clearly communicate expectations and restrictions early and often

4. Evaluate often

- After action – how did the event go? Did any situation arise that was unexpected? Should our approach be adjusted for that type of event?

5. Look ahead

- Watch the health metrics
- Prepare ahead of time to scale back events as health conditions indicate

Procedures & Protocols for Events

- All events should have a designated **event coordinator** who will assume responsibility for health and safety protocols. **Coordinators maintain contact information for all participants** of non-public events. Coordinators will be asked to provide brief feedback after the event – # of attendees, protocols used, whether everyone felt comfortable, anything they would do differently next time.
- **Minimum requirements of indoor events: masks and 3'-6' of social distancing**, based on rated occupancy per room. Mask and distancing requirements may be waived for non-public events with unanimous consent of all participants and after discussion with staff.
- When possible, events provide a **streaming option** for those who are unable to attend in person.
- Special events will be treated on a case-by-case basis, considering the above guidelines.
- Non-public events, especially ticketed events, will communicate conditions of in-person attendance beforehand.
- Public events, regardless of size, must assume attendance by, and provide for, vulnerable persons and implement appropriate protocols (masks, social distancing, and limited capacity to allow for distancing).
- Regathering Task Force continues to provide guidance and receive feedback about these processes. (regathering@uucolumbia.net)

Types of Events

The task force categorized different kinds of UUCC gatherings and activities based on how much risk of COVID-19 infection they might pose to participants and how difficult it would be to mitigate that risk (through masks, distancing, etc.). In classifying activities, the task force considered the following:

- Outdoor events are much safer than indoor events.
- Events with fewer people pose less risk, are easier to accommodate for social distancing, and are easier for staff or organizer to know the risk level for participants.
- For non-public events, coordinators of events have the opportunity to confirm the risk tolerance for all participants ahead of time (i.e., is everyone comfortable being unmasked?). Unanimous consent may allow for relaxing of some protocols.

The activities were categorized as follows:

a. Indoor vs. Outdoor:

- **Outdoor** – takes place entirely outside the OBIC building. Could be on the OBIC grounds or off-site.
- **Indoor** – takes place partially or entirely inside the OBIC building.

b. Number of attendees:

- Small – fewer than 10 attendees
- Medium – between 10 and 25 attendees
- Large – 26 or more attendees

c. Public or non-public:

- **Public** – events with general invitations where the attendees are not known ahead of time and/or attendees remain anonymous; for example, **worship, forums & open workshops**.
- **Non-public** – events with a specific known audience, such as reflection groups, designated task force meetings, or ticketed events where participant information is known.

d. Special consideration events

- Worship
- Worship with choir
- Auction
- Concerts (Coffeehouse, Chalice Concert Series)
- Religious Education for children under age 12
- Religious Education for children and youth age 12 and up

Metrics for Community Spread of COVID-19

To measure the status of COVID-19 transmission in our community and the risk from the virus, UUCC will review data from three primary sources:

Covid Act Now for Howard County

(https://covidactnow.org/us/maryland-md/county/howard_county/?s=1929847)

Howard County COVID-19 dashboard

(<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/health/covid-19-cases-dashboard>)

CDC county-level dashboard

(<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>)

These sources provide county-level information about four key metrics for the virus: **daily new cases**, **infection rate**, **positive test rate** and **ICU capacity used**. We will use these in combination to determine the risk level for UUCC.

Primary attention will be given to the metrics in Howard County, but our community extends beyond the borders of one county. Therefore, some weight will be given to health conditions in surrounding counties, including Anne Arundel, Carroll, Montgomery, Prince George's and the Baltimore Metropolitan Area. The table below shows the four main metrics and associated risk levels.

The risk level will be assessed on a weekly basis. The status of each metric and the trend line (levels are going up or going down) will be evaluated to determine the risk level for UUCC.

Based on the risk level, the UUCC Executive Team, in consultation with the Regathering Task Force and/or the Board of Trustees, will decide which planned activities may go forward.

Risk levels

Metric	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk	Very high risk	Severe risk
Daily New Cases (7 day *average* per 100K people)	< 1	1-10	10-25	25-75	> 75
Infection Rate	< 0.9	0.9-1.1	1.1-1.4	> 1.4	N/A
Positive Test Rate	< 3%	3%-10%	10%-20%	> 20%	N/A
ICU Capacity Used	< 70%	70%-80%	80%-85%	> 85%	N/A

How to use the metrics:

- If indicators suggest different risk phases, we will act according to the higher risk level. For example, if daily new cases, infection rate and ICU capacity are all at low risk level, but the positive test rate is medium risk, we will consider UCC at medium risk level.
- When moving from a higher to a lower risk level, it is recommended that we be in the lower level for 21 days before implementing changes—i.e., before adding more in-person activities or allowing relaxation of mitigation measures (masks, distancing).
- Because some risk levels cover broad ranges, attention will be given to trend lines. For example, for medium risk the range is 1 to 10 new cases per day. If the risk is still within that range, but trending up, that may warrant a return to less risky activities/more mitigation strategies.

Broad guidelines based on risk level:

Very High and above

- All staff must work remotely
- No in-person events of any kind

High

- Staff works remotely
- A single staff person may be in the office
- No in-person events of any kind

Medium

- Some staff may work at the office
- Outdoor events may be supported
- No indoor events allowed
- No large events (even outdoors)

Low

- Outdoor events supported
- Indoor events supported on a gradual roll-out basis

Work of the Regathering Task Force

The UUCC Regathering Task Force began meeting in April 2021 with the goal of developing a plan for resuming in-person activities in UUCC.

The task force consulted guidance from various sources, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Howard County Health Department, the State of Maryland, and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

Some members of the task force participated in leadership discussions sponsored by UUA to explore issues related to regathering in discussion with other congregations across the country.

The task force also conducted a survey of UUCC membership to gain insight on the concerns across the congregation with regard to resuming in-person events.

Task force members had informal conversations with staff and members of the congregation involved in children's religious education and choir to determine what special considerations might need to be given to those activities.

The Regathering Task Force will continue to consult with the Executive Team at least through the end of calendar year 2021. You may communicate with the whole task force by email: regathering@uucolumbia.net.

Members of the UUCC Regathering Task Force:

Jodi Brown

Liam Estell

Jen Hayashi

Heidi Schweingruber

Lindsay Thompson

Cindi Wood

Sean Griffin, Executive Director

Rev. Paige Getty, Minister