



## **Pandemic Congregational Guidelines | May, 2020 Update**

In mid-March, when we suspended gatherings at First UU Church, many of us likely thought we would suspend for a time and have a grand re-gathering in some future. Though we wish that could be the case, we now know that it will be a gradual process, and we hope to do so with intention, love and grace.

To fulfill our mission of being a compassionate community and being mindful of our ethical responsibility to the well-being of our community, these phases provide a guide (though open to change) for church life reimagined for the coming months. The guidelines were developed in consultation with best practices from religious and health sources.

We will continue to live our mission of nurturing spirituality and practicing justice, providing online opportunities for connection of mind and spirit through worship services and small groups, as well as spiritual care for our members and friends. This is important for the long-term to support all those who will not feel comfortable gathering even after government guidelines are opened. It is an act of love to stay connected while keeping each other safe.

Please note that in-person gatherings are not allowed on the property in Phase 1 (our current phase) and in subsequent phases, must be approved by the Minister or Board. Online options (with assistance) are available through the office.

These are not easy times, or easy practices. The core of any congregation, from the very meaning of the word, is to be together. We miss sharing space together – in song, in fellowship, in caring, in laughter. We don't know the exact timeline of these phases, or what "normal" will be in the coming months. At the same time, we know there is love and resilience at the core of our faith, and our church. We have, together, kept our church alive, even as how we "do" church has changed. What a time to be alive. May we do so with love.

*Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer, Minister  
Gail Bishop, on behalf of the Board of Directors*

## PHASE 1

### ***Congregational Life:***

- Sunday services are recorded remotely from home.
- All in-person meetings, gatherings, or projects in the building or on the property are suspended.
- Small group meetings and programming take place online only.

### ***Staff practices:***

- Staff work remotely.
- Meetings are held online.
- Only essential work occurs at the church with Minister or Board approval.

## PHASE 2

### ***Congregational Life:***

- Sunday services are recorded separately as a combination of remote and Sanctuary recordings with only the necessary number of people present.
- Small, necessary projects at the building may be approved by the Minister or the Board and will include distancing and safety practices.
- Small groups take place online only.

### ***Staff practices:***

- Staff are encouraged to work remotely, with limited office hours.
- If working at the church, staff must maintain distance, including limiting main office use to only one person (in addition to Office Admin.).
- High-touch surfaces will be disinfected daily.
- Staff meetings will be held in large spaces with online options, while maintaining distance and encouraged mask use.

*(continued...)*

## PHASE 3

### ***Congregational Life:***

- Sunday services are recorded and/or livestreamed in the Sanctuary by a small group of people maintaining moderate distance.
- In-person small groups may be approved by the Minister or the Board and will include online options and distancing and safety practices.

### ***Staff practices:***

- Staff are allowed to continue to work remotely.
- When working at the church, staff are encouraged to maintain distance.
- High-touch surfaces will be disinfected regularly (a few times each week).
- Staff meetings may be held in larger spaces with online options, while maintaining distance.

## PHASE 4

### ***Congregational Life:***

- Sunday services are available online and for a limited number of in-person attendees in the Sanctuary. Various practices to limit risk will be implemented (including limits on communal singing, physical greetings, shared hymnals/offering plates, food & drink, etc.)
- Small groups may be approved by staff or the Board, and will include online options as much as possible, and distancing and safety practices.

### ***Staff practices:***

- Staff are allowed to continue to work remotely as preferred.
- High-touch surfaces will be disinfected regularly (a few times each week).
- Staff meetings may be held in larger spaces with online options.

## PHASE 5

*When a vaccine, treatment or other circumstances that make public risk of the virus extremely low or non-existent, we will resume regular programming and gathering. To maintain a commitment to inclusive access, we will continue to use new technological possibilities of online access to worship, small groups, and gatherings. We hope these tools will serve the church for many years to come.*