

Foothills Unitarian Church - Guidance for Gatherings

Updated October 4, 2021

Background / Philosophy

These guidelines are intended to support staff members and group and team leaders within the Foothills Unitarian Church in making decisions about group gatherings through October 31, 2021 when we will re-evaluate based on the latest information on the virus and safety precautions in light of boosters.

As of October 4, 2021, [COVID Act Now](#) places Larimer County at a Level Red, indicating that we are at a **very high risk** for community spread and precautions must be taken.

If the level increases further, we will in turn enhance our safety measures. If the level reduces further to yellow or green, we will reduce the measures we recommend. Updates will be sent out using our weekly emails, as well as posted on our website at foothillsuu.org/reopening.

While so much of our lives are dictated by the needs of capitalism or politics, in our community, we are guided by our covenant. This covenant asks us to practice ongoing learning, assume good intent, invest in trust, and to be more focused on the collective instead of individual preferences. With these practices as our foundation, we must discern together our best sense of how to manage our values of safety, inclusivity, accessibility, and connection.

We have learned so much during the pandemic, and that learning is reflected here. Some of the things that we did early on - emphasizing social distancing and handwashing for example are no longer core safety practices; in their place we turn to masks and ventilation. We are also now benefiting from the wide availability of highly effective vaccines. We support and encourage everyone to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that vaccinations become less effective after six months of the second shot, and are less effective against the Delta variant. Further, for those under age 12, and for those who have suppressed immune systems, vaccinations are not available and/or are not as effective. In our multi-generational, intentionally diverse community, this means safety precautions remain a necessary practice of hospitality and mutual care until infection rates for COVID are at a Level Green on the [COVID Act Now website](#).

We strive to make every gathering, group, and program of the church as accessible as possible for the full range of people who seek to participate.

While it is true that we have learned so much since the pandemic began, there remains still so

much unknown. In this time of continued uncertainty, we are committed to continuing to learn together, and to ground this learning in our mission, and in our values.

Principles For Deciding Where and How To Gather

- 1. *Privilege Outdoor Gatherings:*** Due to the high rates of vaccinations and decreasing infection rates in [Larimer County](#), there are a number of ways that outdoor gatherings can now be held safely and inclusively. Indoor gatherings are riskier, depending on factors such as vaccination status, the use of masks, and ventilation.
- 2. *Prioritize Accessibility:*** One of the gifts of the pandemic time has been our ability to include those who are unable to attend when we only offer programming in person. Meeting in person may be less accessible for members of your group due to safety, mobility, ability to hear, or other reasons. Default to choosing the most inclusive option for current and future members.
- 3. *Recognize the pros and cons of “Hybrid” gatherings:*** It is easier to have everyone either all online, or all in-person. However, it is more inclusive to have both options available. We need to manage these polarities as best we can. By September, we will be able to provide technical support for some hybrid gatherings where people are able to gather both online and in person at the same time at the church; for now, we will support hybrid gatherings as we are able.
- 4. *Scheduling Space on the Church Campus (indoors or outdoors):*** You may now schedule church-related group events at our building. If you wish to hold a gathering at the church (for an already established group), please use [this form](#) and we will let you know if space and resources are available for your needs. Ideally, forms should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event date.
- 5. *Engage in Covenantal Conversations:*** Talk with your group about different needs and values you each have. Before moving to an in-person-only gathering, there needs to be a general consensus in support of this plan, and reasonable accommodations for those who are not able/ready whenever possible. Try to create a safe place where people can honestly express their needs. [Here is a great site](#) exploring these sorts of conversation - an engagement they describe as “covenantal consent.” Remember that some of us are deeply uncomfortable with conflict and so will struggle to name our needs if they seem unpopular. Also, many of us are exhausted with decision making in the midst of uncertainty. Go slowly, and with love, and keep in mind the bigger picture. It doesn’t all need to be figured out right away. It’s ok to slow decisions down. It’s ok to try things and then adjust based on shared reflections of the experience.

Specific Guidance - Outdoor Gatherings

Precaution Area	Guidance
Age Limits	All ages are welcome to gather outdoors.
Masks	<p>When children under 12 are present, masks are always required for anyone age 3 or older.</p> <p>Exception: If everyone is over 12, willing to be distanced, the group has all consented (including parent/guardians for anyone under 18), and each participant has submitted an attestation of vaccination then masks outdoors are optional.</p>
Registration / Contact Tracking	All church sponsored gatherings are required to complete an event check in / attendance reports. All non-routine outdoor gatherings are required to utilize a pre-registration so that we can inform those registered if plans change.
Size Limits	With appropriate registration and check in, outdoor group gatherings are not limited in size.
Activity Limits	<p>Due to extreme contagiousness of the Delta variant, group singing is currently not allowed. For more information on this subject, take a look at this link.</p> <p>When children under 12 are present, there can be no eating/drinking together outdoors.</p> <p>Exception: If everyone is over 12, willing to be distanced, the group has all consented (including parent/guardians for anyone under 18), and each participant has submitted an attestation of vaccination then the group can remove its masks and eat/drink together.</p>
Time Limits	No time limits for outdoor gatherings, except the limits of our energy!

Specific Guidance - Indoor Gatherings

Precaution Area	Guidance
Age Limits	<p>Groups that include children/youth under the age of 12 cannot meet indoors.</p> <p>Groups that include only those who are 12 and over are authorized to meet in person indoors.</p>
Masks	<p>Masks are required for all those age 3 and over who meet indoors.</p> <p>Exception: If the group has 10 or fewer, when everyone is age 12 or older, willing to be distanced, the group has all explicitly consented (including parents/guardians for anyone under age 18), and each participant has submitted an attestation of vaccination, then masks indoors are optional.</p> <p>For groups with more than 10, masks are always required indoors.</p>
Registration / Contact Tracking	<p>All church sponsored gatherings are required to complete an event check in / attendance reports. All indoor gatherings are required to utilize a pre-registration so that we can inform those registered if plans change.</p>
Size Limits	<p>Indoor gatherings should be limited to no more than 80 people due to the need to manage potential contact tracing, and the risk increase for gatherings indoors beyond this size.</p>
Activity Limits	<p>Due to extreme contagiousness of the Delta variant, group singing is currently not allowed. For more information on this subject, take a look at this link.</p> <p>There is no eating or drinking when meeting indoors.</p> <p>Exception: If the group has 10 or fewer, when everyone is age 12 or older, willing to be distanced, the group has all explicitly consented (including parents/guardians for anyone under age 18), and each participant has submitted an attestation of vaccination, then the group can remove masks and eat/drink together indoors.</p> <p>For groups with more than 10 people, there is no eating/drinking indoors.</p>
Time Limits	<p>The more time spent indoors together, the greater the risk of virus transmission. As a result, we advise indoor gatherings to last no longer than</p>

	2 hours.
Other	The space must have sufficient ventilation and airflow the entire time. Keeping windows and doors open is strongly encouraged, with fans placed at doors and windows pointing outward to exhaust the air from the group space. If you are meetings the church, please be sure all windows and door are secured upon exit.

Specific Guidance - Staff Team and Office Volunteer Gatherings

- Foothills staff members are required to be vaccinated.
- Staff members are required to wear masks when working with the community (with any group size) or when anyone with unknown vaccination status enters the building.
- When working with other staff team members, our staff will follow the same guidance as we provide for the whole congregation for masking and gathering.
- We have enrolled in the state’s program for regular testing (as we are qualified for participation) but there are not currently sufficient systems or materials available to make our participation possible. Once these resources are available, we will adapt our systems to participate.

COVID Common Sense Guidelines

- If you receive notice of an exposure, please abstain from attending Foothills gatherings for 5 days past the exposure, and confirm a negative rapid or PCR test result between days 5-7 (in accordance with local guidance) before returning to in-person events or groups.
- Wash your hands before and after the event.
- Don’t touch your face.
- Don’t gather if you feel sick, or if someone you’ve been in contact with is sick.
- Avoid alcohol or other substances, which make it harder to make safe choices.
- Regarding bathroom use, opening a window will decrease risk, as will using the provided disinfecting wipes to wipe down surfaces after their use.
- Before hugging or other physical greetings, seek consent, and provide non-physical touch alternatives if there is not clear mutual consent.

Drafted in partnership by the Foothills Executive Team and the Board of Trustees, with constant consultation from our resident pandemic risk management expert, Tim Clouse, as well as the UUA, Foothills lay leaders and our whole staff team. We always welcome your questions and feedback, as this is a constant process of learning and adaptation. Please email

safety@foothillsuu.org.

Selected Sources:

1. [New CDC Guidelines in Covenantal Community - UUA Guidance](#) (Updated June 2021)
2. [Updated UUA Guidance for Gatherings](#) (Updated April 2021)
3. [State of Colorado's Guidance for Houses of Worship](#) (Updated April 2021)
4. [CDC Guidance for COVID](#)
5. [Larimer County data regarding COVID and Vaccination rates](#)
6. [A Year Into the Pandemic: An article on outdoor transmission from the Washington Post](#)
7. [UUA Guidance regarding Vaccination Status disclosures and related policies](#)
8. Thanks to Foothills member Tim Clouse for risk calculations on these guidelines, and the many lay leaders who provided feedback!

Updated September 15, 2021