

SouthWest UU Church Limited In-Person Worship Begins Again August 15

At our meeting on August 10, 2021, the SWUU Board voted to be open for hybrid worship services on August 15 and for the foreseeable future at a limited 40-person capacity for worship with advance sign up required, using the spreadsheet and procedures in place.

Masks are required, 6 ft. spacing, no Fellowship Hour, no choir, quiet singing. Those who cannot or chose not to attend in-person are welcome to view the service on Zoom. We will also continue to record the service for viewing later. Childcare is currently not available, although caregivers are welcome to use the nursery area in the Fellowship Hall with their child if they wish. No other decisions have been made yet about RE pending discussion with our new DRE, Carolyn Stevens.

Small groups (10 or less) of SWUU members or friends may meet in the building, except in the small classrooms, but must be masked in accordance with current CDC guidelines. The fan on our HVAC system should be turned ON for the duration of the meeting (thermostat located in the back of the Sanctuary). Please turn the fan back to AUTO when you leave. Our building will remain closed to non-SWUU groups for the time being.

We want to acknowledge once again the valuable work of the Reopening Task Force. **This is a change of direction**, however, and several factors led us to this decision.

- By self-report some 97% of our congregation is fully vaccinated, only 3% described themselves as immunocompromised
- Currently less than 1% of fully vaccinated people experience a breakthrough Covid 19 infection.
- The number of breakthrough cases that result in serious illness, hospitalization, or death are extremely low
- There is widespread agreement that the isolation of the Pandemic has negatively affected mental health
- Our members, friends, and visitors need consistency in knowing how and when the church will be open

It is becoming increasingly clear that Covid is something we will have to learn to live with because the virus may never fully go away. With that in mind, **we feel the need to focus on what we do best as a church community--provide stability, connection, and options.**

We will continue to monitor the CDC website but will focus more on the graphs than the

numbers. The current graphs clearly show that although there is an upward trend in cases, we are nowhere near the level of community spread we were at last winter. Hospitalizations and death continue to be at a low level. We will also follow the CDC guidance on mask wearing, since it has been shown that even vaccinated people can spread this highly contagious new Delta variant.

We will monitor the continued effectiveness of the vaccine against the current Covid variants and those that may happen in the future. This is an evolving situation and unfortunately there is no perfect answer here--but we have to reach out to our church family in a way that sustains and supports their spiritual and mental health as well as their physical health. **Attendance at in-person church services or activities continues to be at your own risk.** Each individual must make decisions based on their own health and the health of their family.

If you choose to monitor the CDC website yourself, the URL we have found to be most helpful to track county level data is <https://COVID.cdc.gov/COVID-data-tracker/#county-view>

We do not plan to make any further changes in our Covid policy as long as conditions do not get drastically worse. But we all must recognize that we are in uncharted territory. We ask for your patience and understanding as we continue to travel this road together. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me or any other Board member.

Sincerely,
Dodi Lettus
President, Board of Trustees
SouthWest UU Church