

Covid-19 Safety Policy Effective September 12, 2021

The ascendance of the Delta variant has forced us to rethink our approach to re-opening for in-person worship and gatherings at church. We have been listening to our [UUA leaders](#), speaking with other ministers of all faiths in our area, and following the data tracking the increasing risk of infections. And we are following the UUA Four Principles to Guide Decisions for UU Gatherings

2021 Guidance For UU Gatherings

 Key Principles for Multi-platform Operations

1. Root decisions in the values of inclusion and consent.
2. Follow the science.
3. Go slow and be flexible.
4. Be realistic with expectations of ourselves and others.

Given that vaccination does not prevent a person from getting infected or transmitting the virus to others, we have adopted the following policy which will guide our choices this fall as we resume Sunday sanctuary services on September 12.

1. In-person large gatherings and small gatherings may be held in our church building and on our grounds in accord with the guidelines in the tables below.
2. All in-person worship services will be live-streamed.

**Guidelines for Large Gatherings and Worship¹ at First Parish in Brookline
as of September 12, 2021**

Risk Level ²	Large Gathering and Worship at Church ¹	Masks ⁴	6' Social Distance	Singing ⁵	Eating, Drinking
Very High Risk and above	Outdoor ³	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁵	No
	Indoor	No large gatherings at church			
High Risk	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁵	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	No	No
Medium Risk	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁵	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	No	No
Low Risk	Outdoor	Yes	No	Yes ⁵	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. Large gatherings
 - a. Have greater than 25 attendees, not counting those officiating and helping at services or leading groups
 - b. Will have one appointed Safety Observer for every 25 attendees
 - c. Will have a sign-up and attestation process for indoor Sunday worship, to maintain attendance at stated capacity and facilitate contact tracing
2. From [Covid Act Now](#). Risk level at First Parish will be the majority level (2 out of 3) of three Massachusetts counties: Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk.
3. When risk is Very High or Severe we will suspend all large, in-person outdoor worship, concerts, or fundraisers.
4. Masks are required for all large gatherings as unvaccinated children or other vulnerable people will be included.
5. For outdoor singing (where outdoor gatherings have been deemed safe), all singers must wear well-fitted masks and stay at least 10 to 12 feet apart. Singing guidelines for congregation and choir to be determined by the worship team using [UUA singing guidance](#).

**Guidelines for Small Group¹ Gatherings at First Parish in Brookline
as of September 12, 2021**

Risk Level ²	Small Group Gathering at Church ¹	Masks	6' Social Distance	Singing ⁴	Eating, Drinking
Very High Risk and above	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁴	No
	Indoor	No Small Group Gatherings at church			
High Risk	Outdoor	Maybe ³	Yes	Yes ⁴	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	No	No
Medium Risk	Outdoor	Maybe ³	Yes	Yes ⁴	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	No	No
Low Risk	Outdoor	Maybe ³	Yes	Yes ⁴	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. Small group gatherings
 - a. Have 25 or fewer attendees including officiants and leaders
 - b. Include RE activities. As children below age 12 cannot yet be vaccinated, we will hold religious education activities and multi-age programs outdoors when weather permits. If children are indoors, ventilation will be maximized and room occupancy will be reduced. All RE activities require masks
2. From [Covid Act Now](#). Risk level at First Parish will be the majority level (2 out of 3) of three Massachusetts counties: Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk.
3. The decision on masks for small outdoor gatherings will be made by the attendees using our inclusive meeting guidelines.
4. For outdoor singing (where outdoor gatherings have been deemed safe), all singers must wear well-fitted masks and stay at least 10 to 12 feet apart. Singing guidelines for congregation and choir to be determined by the worship team using [UUA singing guidance](#).

Using the Building for Church meetings:

1. *Contact our Parish Administrator*, Ebiere Omoregie (ebiere@firstparishinbrookline.org), (617)909-3554 if you are visiting or planning a meeting at the Church.
2. When the Guidelines permit, committees and covenantal groups may meet at the building from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM 7 days a week. Organizers will send a list of those who attended in-person to the church administrator for contact tracing.
3. *It is always safer to gather outdoors or virtually*; see recommendations on inclusive meetings in the Appendix.
4. To schedule a meeting, check the [church calendar](#) for room availability and request that room through the church administrator. The meeting will be posted on the church calendar by the church administrator.
5. The kitchen may not be used to prepare food for indoor or outdoor gatherings.
6. Church bathrooms will be available for indoors and outdoors gatherings.
7. First Parish prioritizes building use that helps meet the spiritual and religious needs of our community (worship, covenant groups) and our justice work

Meeting Spaces for Gatherings.

1. Five rooms in the church are large enough to allow groups to meet while maintaining social distance for seated and circulating attendees and group leaders. The maximum number of people permitted to gather in these rooms is as follows:
 - A. Sanctuary: 60 people seated
 - B. Pierce Hall: 20 people seated
 - C. Lyon Chapel: 20 people seated
 - D. Dana Room: 10 people seated
 - E. Peterson Room 6 people seated
 - F. Kitchen: 4 people standing (no eating or drinking allowed)
2. These capacities were established using the current state guidelines for houses of worship, and allow for social distancing between family units seated and circulating.
3. Those officiating and helping at services or leading groups are not included in large group capacity calculations.
4. None of these rooms have mechanical ventilation (fresh air). Windows and doors should be opened during events in all rooms to allow in outside air, and closed at the conclusion of the event.

Safe Community Practices for All Church Activities on Church Premises

1. *Masks are required to be worn* by members and guests over the age of two when inside the building.
2. *Social distancing of 6'* is required inside the building
3. *Sign-up with Self-attestation is required for indoor Worship*; see attestation statement in the appendix. Do not attend if you are sick or showing symptoms of any kind.
4. Hand hygiene is highly recommended. Hand sanitizer is available at all building entrances.
5. *Consider gathering outdoors or virtually*; see recommendations on inclusive meetings in the Appendix
6. Safety Observers guide and remind folks to maintain physical distance and to wear masks. Safety Observers and Group Leaders are responsible for making the guidelines known to all attendees. A Safety Observer or Group Leader may ask anyone refusing to observe physical distancing, refusing to wear a mask, or who continues to wear a mask improperly to leave the event.
7. Event participants are expected to clean up after themselves. All areas are cleaned only weekly by our custodian.
8. Risk level to be measured each Monday and used Tuesday to guide worship and activities Tuesday through the next Monday. First Parish will notify the congregation when the Level changes, and when the guideline changes take effect.

Staff

All staff will be fully vaccinated, including booster shots, as advised by the CDC. Building use by staff is determined through supervisor agreement. The main kitchen will be available for staff and attendees minimal food preparation, to be consumed in separate spaces. Individuals may prepare food for themselves and not others.

Rentals

Rentals will begin September 1. Tenants are NOT required to follow First Parish policies for members and guests, and ARE required to follow state and national requirements for their operations. Tenants are using the building consistent with their rental agreement. See the church schedule to determine when and in what spaces renters are in occupancy.

Changes to this Policy

This policy is subject to change and will be revised as needed. Our policy will be guided by federal and state rules and regulations, current science, and Unitarian Universalist values. This policy was adopted by the First Parish Reopening Planning Group on August 30, 2021, as directed by the Parish Board

Appendix

1. Self-attestation
2. Inclusive meetings

Appendix #1: First Parish Brookline – COVID Self Attestation

Required for all persons attending in-person indoor gatherings

We do not ask the vaccination status for those attending our in-person indoor services. Because we have some differences among our membership on vaccination we are planning our safety standards as if all are unvaccinated and at high risk.

We know from personal sharing that more than 90% of our congregation is vaccinated. We hope visitors are also vaccinated, unless medical conditions prevent this. We are continuing to require masks for all people in order to slow the virus's spread and to protect our children and more vulnerable members of our congregation."

Please check all appropriate boxes:

Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms?

- fever or feeling feverish
- sore throat
- new cough
- new nasal congestion or new runny nose
- muscle aches
- new loss of smell or taste
- shortness of breath

If you have checked any of the boxes above, please be considerate of your faith community and attend virtually rather than in-person

NO SYMPTOMS

You are cleared to attend in-person services/events inside First Parish Brookline TODAY. Please provide the information below for contact tracing, should that be necessary

Name _____

Date _____

Phone _____

Appendix 2: Inclusive Meetings

First Parish in Brookline is a welcoming congregation; one where we seek to ensure that everyone, of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and identities feels fully cared for and included. In that spirit, we strongly encourage small groups and committees to consider the needs and concerns of each participant, when making decisions about in-person meetings.

Many of us have successfully experienced small group and committee meetings virtually over the past 18 months, and many of us are already planning to continue to meet this way. Some groups may be considering meeting this Fall in person (indoors or outdoors, depending on the current risk level,) or meeting in a hybrid format (some participants in person and some virtual.)

Those of who have experienced hybrid meetings as a virtual participant will attest to the fact that they can be frustrating and isolating. Also, a participant may feel peer pressure to agree to meeting in this fashion, especially if they are the only one who is reluctant to meet in person.

Therefore, we urge group leaders to individually assess the true needs and concerns of each group member before making a final decision on meeting fully in-person, virtually or in hybrid fashion. Rev. Lisa will be available for consultation on such decisions.

This UUA article on [Covenantal Consent](#) is a useful guide to being considerate when making in-person meeting decisions, even though it is mostly focused on masks. It has been updated in light of the Delta variant.