


## Covid-19 Safety Policy Effective December 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 rates in our congregation are very high, and that vaccination does not prevent a person from getting infected or transmitting the virus to others, we have revised the Covid-19 Safety Policy based on our experience with re-opening the church to in-person sanctuary services on September 12. The revised policy will guide us for winter worship services and small group gatherings in 2022

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

**Guidelines for Large Gatherings and Worship<sup>1</sup> at First Parish in Brookline  
as of December 12, 2021**

Risk Level <sup>2</sup>	Large Gathering and Worship at Church <sup>1</sup>	Masks	6' Social Distance	Singing <sup>5</sup>	Eating, Drinking
<b>Severe Risk<sup>3</sup></b>	Outdoor	No large gatherings at church			
	Indoor	No large gatherings at church			
<b>Very High Risk<sup>4</sup></b>	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>5</sup>	No
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>6</sup> 20	No
<b>High Risk</b>	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>5</sup>	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>6</sup> 20	No
<b>Medium Risk</b>	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>5</sup>	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>6</sup> 20	No
<b>Low Risk</b>	Outdoor	Yes	No	Yes <sup>5</sup>	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>6</sup> 20	No

1. Large gatherings
  - a. Have greater than 25 attendees, not counting those officiating and helping at services or leading groups
  - b. Masks are required for all large gatherings as unvaccinated or other vulnerable people will be included.
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 and above 50 daily new Covid cases per 100k or Severe, we will suspend all large, in-person outdoor worship, concerts, or fundraisers.
4. Very High Risk level for First Parish means up to 50 daily new Covid cases per 100k. Very High Risk levels require sign-up and attestation for indoor Sunday worship, to maintain attendance at stated capacity and facilitate contact tracing.
5. For outdoor singing (where outdoor gatherings have been deemed safe), all singers must wear well-fitted masks and stay at least 6 feet apart. Singing guidelines for congregation and choir to be determined by the worship team informed by [UUA singing guidance](#).
6. For indoor worship the choir may sing with the maximum number of singers indicated. Singers will wear well-fitted masks, and maintain 6 feet distance from each other and 12

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feet distance from the congregation. Singing guidelines for congregation and choir to be determined by the worship team informed by [UUA singing guidance](#).

**Guidelines for Small Group<sup>1</sup> Gatherings at First Parish in Brookline  
as of December 12, 2021**

Risk Level <sup>2</sup>	Small Group Gathering at Church <sup>1</sup>	Masks	6' Social Distance	Choir Rehearsal <sup>6</sup>	Eating, Drinking
<b>Severe Risk<sup>3</sup></b>	Outdoor	No small group gatherings at church			
	Indoor	No small group gatherings at church			
<b>Very High Risk<sup>4</sup></b>	Outdoor	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>High Risk</b>	Outdoor	May Be <sup>5</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Indoor	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Medium Risk</b>	Outdoor	May Be <sup>5</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Indoor	May Be <sup>5</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Low Risk</b>	Outdoor	May Be <sup>5</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Indoor	May Be <sup>5</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes

1. Small group gatherings
  - a. Have 25 or fewer attendees including officiants and leaders
  - b. Include RE activities. As children below age 12 can now be vaccinated, we will hold religious education activities and multi-age programs outdoors when weather permits. If children are indoors, ventilation and air filtration units will be used. 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. When risk is Very High above 50 daily new Covid cases per 100k or Severe, we will suspend all small group in-person gatherings.
4. Very High Risk level for First Parish means up to 50 daily new Covid cases per 100k. Very High Risk levels require attendance taking at all small group gatherings to facilitate contact tracing.
5. The decision on masks for small indoor and outdoor gatherings May Be made by the attendees using our inclusive meeting guidelines.

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6. For indoor church choir rehearsals, see the “standards for choir rehearsal and performance” below. 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 are responsible for keeping a list of those who attended in-person small group meetings, in case the church administrator requests it 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, then 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: 100 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.

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4. None of these rooms have mechanical ventilation (fresh air). Windows and doors should be opened during events in all rooms, as weather allows, to allow in outside air, and closed at the conclusion of the event.
5. Air filtration units are available in some rooms. Meeting organizers should plan to turn filtration units on high at the start of each meeting for twenty minutes. After twenty minutes, filtration units may be turned down to medium if necessary to facilitate conversation.
6. Exhaust air fans have been installed in the sanctuary tower, and MIRV-13 filters have been installed in the sanctuary hot air heating system. During worship, both exhaust air and furnace systems are to be run.
7. For worship in cold weather, exterior doors may be closed if the door to the parish hall is kept open, the exhaust fan system running, and the sanctuary is being actively monitored for CO2 levels. If the CO2 levels rise more than 500 PPM above the outside air, the exterior doors are to be opened until the CO2 levels drop below the threshold.

**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. 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. Small group leaders, worship greeters and ushers are requested to familiarize themselves with these guidelines and to inform attendees how to comply with them when needed.
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.
9. Standards for Choir rehearsal and performance
  - a. Vaccination: All choir members expected to be vaccinated.
  - b. Attestation: Choir members are to attest that they have no symptoms and have not been exposed to anyone with Covid or Covid-like symptoms.

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- c. Masks: All choir members will wear tight fitting masks which will be used for rehearsal and performances during worship.
- d. Distancing: The choir will be distanced, at least 6', during rehearsal.
- e. Rehearsal breaks: The choir will sing for 30 minutes, take a twenty-minute break in Lyon, for air exchange in the sanctuary and then sing for another 30 minutes.
- f. Doors at front and back of church to be left open for fresh air.
- g. No food or drink: Singers may bring their own water bottles to sip, as needed.

### **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, and revised effective December 12, 2021, as approved by the Parish Board on December 5, 2021

### **Appendix**

- 1. Self-attestation
- 2. Inclusive meetings

## Appendix #1: First Parish Brookline – COVID Self Attestation

When sign-ups are required for worship or small group gatherings, this self-attestation will be part of the sign-up process

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.