

**Leesburg United Methodist Church**  
**LUMC Post-COVID Recovery Policy - Worship/Ministry Activities For Summer, 2021**

June 4, 2021

1] **“At this time”** ie, as we enter the summer months. In this very fluid and somewhat uncertain time, we are moving forward with our decision-making based on the best information available. These guidelines reflect our effort to protect the health of all, while also allowing more accessibility to worship, fellowship, and other ministry activities. We will continue to evaluate external and internal conditions and we must be ready to respond accordingly. “At this time” also means: “stay flexible” as we anticipate additional changes toward normalcy as Fall approaches.

2) **“may”** – just because the best guidance from federal, state, local, and Church judicatories say we can do certain things, does not mean that we should. All must be evaluated and filtered through the lens of what is best for our congregation – ESPECIALLY THE MOST VULNERABLE among us. This is not about personal preference. As followers of Christ, we are called to set aside “what I want” in order to protect “the least of these”, as we communicate the good news of Christ to all

Great news! We are finally seeing a decline in COVID cases and deaths, for which we praise God. As more and more of our members get vaccinated, we are moving forward toward the resumption of pre-COVID activities and events. Our Bishop Sharma Lewis and the VA Conference Healthy Church Team (now known as the PRG for Post COVID Re-entry Group) have helped us to navigate uncharted territory with respect to this pandemic such that not a single LUMC member, attender, or guest has contracted COVID-19 through our ministries!

Bishop Lewis has given permission to local churches, as of May 29, to make our own decisions consistent with the CDC guidelines, the Virginia Department of Health, and the Loudoun Health Department.

Here’s the latest from Loudoun County (<https://www.loudoun.gov/5356/COVID-19-Reopening-Loudoun-County>), VA Department of Health (<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2021/may/headline-895235-en.html>) , and the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>) :

1. Fully vaccinated persons are no longer required to wear face-coverings in most indoor settings (including worship).
2. Un-vaccinated and partially vaccinated persons ages 5 and older should continue to wear face coverings.
3. The restriction on the number of persons that can gather has been lifted by Governor Northam.
4. Fully vaccinated persons do not need to physically distance in any setting except where required by laws or regulations.

With these guidelines in mind, and at this time, Leesburg United Methodist Church is amending our previous requirements for in-person worship and ministry activities as follows. The best medical advice at this time has emphasized that extremely low risk of fully vaccinated persons getting or transmitting COVID-19. Thus:

## **In-person worship**

1. We will continue to provide hand sanitizer at all entrances.
2. Holy Communion – we will continue to use pre-packaged communion for in-person worship
3. Baptism – We are now celebrating the sacrament of Baptism now that our clergy have been fully vaccinated.
4. Based on the most recent CDC guidelines, Virginia Governor Northam’s recent directives, and current guidance from our Virginia Annual Conference:
  - a. Fully vaccinated persons:
    - a.1 will not need to wear a mask for indoor or outdoor worship .
    - a.2 will not need to practice physical distancing for indoor or outdoor worship
    - a.3 may preach or lead worship without a mask indoor or outdoor
    - a.4 may sing without a mask, indoor and outdoor
  - b. Non-Vaccinated persons:
    - b.1 should wear a mask for indoor worship, but will not be asked to for outdoor worship
    - b.2 should practice physical distancing for indoor and outdoor worship
    - b.3 should preach or lead worship/singing indoors with a mask on
    - b.4 may sing while wearing their mask indoors, but the mask is not needed outdoors
  - c. All:
    - c.1 are encouraged to check-in online prior to worship or self-check-in at the door using the health acknowledgement poster/guidelines; pre-registration will no longer be required
    - c.2 will be encouraged to respond to the optional question of whether or not they have been vaccinated when planning to attend worship. This will help us know the percentage of our membership who have been vaccinated, thus enabling better decisions with regard to the safety of all.
5. **In General:**
  - a. Fellowship/Hospitality – at this time, we will not be serving refreshments except for pre-packaged foods or purchased from local restaurants/grocery stores (eg. Dunkin’ Donuts, Starbucks, Wegmans, Giant, etc.); or catered foods.  
The PRG will be coming up with additional guidance for this.
  - b. With the greatly reduced risk of transmission by contact with various surfaces, we are allowing bathroom use during in-person, indoor activities. All persons using bathrooms should follow hand washing guidelines (wash for 20 seconds).
  - c. Our indoor capacity is now based on the standard occupancy restrictions for the space.

For those who have been vaccinated and thus are not required to wear a mask, you still may wear a face-covering while participating in our indoor worship (and other activities) as encouraged by our Bishop.

Also, during indoor worship, we will set the HVAC fans to “On” versus “Auto” and leave the rear doors of the sanctuary open to ensure a constant fresh air flow through the sanctuary, since our HVAC air handlers bring in 20% fresh air.

## **Ministry Activities**

1. General guidelines for ministry activities should follow the guidelines above for worship as applicable, unless otherwise noted below.
2. No overnight activities this summer.
3. Non-vaccinated persons should still “check-in” either through pre-registration or just prior to the event.
4. For outdoor activities, vaccinated children, youth, and adults do not need a mask.
5. For outdoor activities, non-vaccinated children, youth, and adults who have been through the “check-in” process do not need a mask – but may still wear one.
6. Ministries are asked to submit their MAP (Mitigation Assistance Plan) to the pastor and to the Post-Covid Re-entry Group for review two weeks prior to the activity, making use of the MAP template and questions from the VA Conference.
7. For ongoing activities (eg. a Discipleship Group, UM Women Circle), once the initial MAP has been reviewed that will be sufficient unless a group makes changes in their activities.
8. Capacity is now not limited by COVID restrictions.
9. Ministry activities involving children and non-vaccinated persons should provide for pre-registration utilizing the Healthy Acknowledgment Questions in order to assess health at the time of the activity.
10. Pre-packaged or catered food is preferred over “bring your own” or “pot-luck”.

Thank you, Leesburg United Methodist Church, for keeping one another safe. Unlike other nearby churches, including a couple of United Methodist Churches, we have not had a single instance of COVID transmission as a result of a church activity! We pray that continues as we emerge from this pandemic and continue to re-launch our ministries.

*Rev. Jim Wishmyer and the LUMC Post-COVID Recovery Group*