

When We Meet Again

April 2021

The Board and staff team are beginning to imagine the time when opening the building and grounds to on-site gatherings might be possible again. Beginning in April, we will hold several congregational gatherings, with Board members facilitating break-out groups, to gather questions and ideas from members and friends. We will also gather questions and ideas from key committees. Responses from these gatherings, and from the Protocols Advisory team, together with resources from the Mn. Dept. of Public Health, the UUA and other sources, will guide staff in their recommendations to the Board through the summer and beyond.

Our Intentions

- to shape an evolving plan for gradual return to on-site activities as soon as possible, with input from the Board, lay leaders/committees and the congregation at large
- to ask the Protocols Advisory Group to guide each step of the plan
- to gather a technology team to enable possibility for each step of the plan
- to expect policy, guidelines and clear expectations to be owned and articulated by the Board, and to be implemented by staff

Core Values: **COURAGE, REVERENCE and COMPASSION**

- We treasure embodied, in-person relationships and engagement.
- We are mindful not only of Covid's physical dangers, but dangers of isolation to emotional and mental health.
- We endorse and will follow the best research and best practices of science.
- We will center the most vulnerable and those most at risk.
- We will care for our members of all ages, and for the wider community (the common good).
- We commit to justice and equity, mindful that access to adequate healthcare is uneven in our society: what feels "safe" to some may be dangerous to others.
- In moving toward re-opening and toward "multi-platform church," we will keep before us the core mission and central work of the congregation - and not try to accomplish tasks or fill needs that other agencies and organizations must address elsewhere.
- As we move forward, we will bring to bear our concern for the earth and seek better practices when we gather on-site.
- We will care for our staff, mindful that they may not be vaccinated as early as most of our members, and mindful of expectations and work/life balance. They must administer and manage every step we take.



Some questions we're holding together

- How can on-site programs be as accessible to all as digital programs are now? Is it important for every program to be equally accessible both ways?
- As we imagine a church that exists both in-person and on-line, will one way of “doing” and “being” a community be more “real” or valid than the other?
- “Re-opening” must occur in phases. It will be a long time before the entire community can gather at once again. What losses and disappointments or surprises may we expect as we move forward? (For example: we may require participants to register online for all on-site gatherings at first. What if people cannot be in worship with their friends? What if their desired group/time-slot is filled? What does it mean to gather on Sunday without singing, or without nursery care, or eating/drinking?)
- What best practices learned in the quaran-time can carry over into post-quaran-time? (For example: beautiful random connections at Social Hour, respectful Zoom etiquette, deliberate inclusion, etc.)
- How can we use this rare moment to shift our thinking and behavior in new ways (regarding our carbon footprint, for example: does the building need to be open 7 days/week? Can committees that meet easily online continue doing that, so people may drive less?) ?
- How will we hold the reality that roles in our community have shifted? (For example: many formerly inactive members are fully present in our digital spaces now, and many formerly active leaders have stopped participating. What happens when the congregation is back in person?)
- What expectations can we establish regarding safe practices (masks, distancing, vaccination, etc.), and how will we talk about and monitor these?
- How can we respect and protect privacy?
- How can we center the needs of those most at risk (physically, emotionally, etc.) and those with marginalized identities? How are we defining “most at risk” and “marginalized identities?”
- How can we imagine a church and a building not just for ourselves, but serving and available to the wider community?
- What new, beautiful and creative possibilities can we carry into our new life together?
- What else? What are YOU asking ... ?