

When We Meet Again *spring 2020*

The Board and staff team are planning the time when opening the building and grounds to on-site gatherings might be possible again (*perhaps starting in fall 2021*). Guided by the CDC, Mn Department of Health, local school districts, and the Unitarian Universalist Association, and with the help of our volunteer “Protocols Advisory Team,” we held 4 listening sessions, hosted by the Board of Directors and attended by 80+ members and friends.

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

Our Core Values and Guiding Principles: COURAGE, REVERENCE and COMPASSION

- We treasure embodied, in-person relationships and engagement.
- We are mindful not only of Covid-19’s physical dangers, but also of 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 are mindful that access to adequate healthcare is uneven in our society: what feels “safe” to some may be dangerous to others. These are matters of justice and equity.
- As we move forward, we will bring to bear our concern for the earth and seek better, more sustainable practices when we gather again 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.
- 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.

We are asking



How might we return? Are there ways to create a “sacred threshold,” perhaps inviting members and friends to pre-register for small gatherings in large spaces, to bless the space and our intentions before rushing in to the swirl of meetings and groups?

Which groups might we bring back first – and why does it matter that they be on-site?

Other Key Questions

- 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/timeslot 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, 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 so, 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?”
- In what ways are our choices as a congregation related to/keeping covenant with the larger communities of which we are a part?