

UCM Covid-19 Task Force Final Minutes  
Twenty-sixth meeting 11/17/21

Present: Liza Earle-Centers, Claudia Clark, Vic Guadagno, Scott Hess (facilitating), Judith Hinds (recording), Rev. Joan, Cass Madison, Jen Matthews, Leslie Parr, Janet Poeton, Donia Prince.

Agenda:

- Changes to minutes of 11/10/21
- Changes to the agenda
- Feedback from area institutions on their operations (Peter)
- Reopening guidelines (Jen and Cass)
- Other business
- Next meeting

1. Changes to Minutes

Joan recommends that we not post links to draft documents. Non-finalized text could create confusion. Claudia removed the Google Docs link from the posted copy of the 11/10/21 minutes.

2. Changes to the Agenda

Added item #5, Guidelines for TF Decision-Making Process. Although it is #5, it was actually discussed first.

3. Feedback from Area Institutions on Their Operations

Scott emailed us Peter's summary of the survey results he received from other churches. We will review his document and discuss at the next meeting.

4. Reopening Guidelines

Cass and Jen emailed us a marked-up version of their draft with all our comments, and Cass offered a list of 5 major questions that stood out as a result of all the comments:

Q1. Are we OK with using CovidActNow as our reference point for Washington County data?

Q2. Do we want to consider any sort of vaccine mandate in any stage to attend in-person worship?

Q3. Under which scenarios are we OK with singing in the sanctuary? Is there a difference between the choir and the congregation singing?

Q4. Do we recommend returning to any version of in-person service while we're in the red/orange stage, which we are today?

Q5. In yellow and green stages can we drop some masking or social distancing requirements? We discussed the first two points today without making any decisions.

Re Q1 – What other sources are there? What about NY Times? Both CovidActNow and NY Times use the same source data from govt. agencies. Do the founding organizations of CovidActNow have any political motivations we should know about? Any of us who have time can delve into this question and look for other possible data reference points. If we have suggestions, **please email them to the group by 11/29 so we can all consider them before the next meeting.**

Re Q2 – Last spring when the current Reopening Guidelines were developed, we decided to avoid vaccine mandates for staff and congregation. It seemed incompatible with our mission statement, and we hoped/expected that a high tax rate in the community would create more safety than it actually has. The current guidelines “encourage” vaccination for all. Discussion ranged on both sides of the question. If there is no mandate, then keeping our other restrictions in

place is of paramount importance. People can think for themselves. Enforcing a mandate is difficult and invasive. Does the level of ventilation make a difference? Does an unmasked speaker in the sanctuary make a difference? How do staff feel about this, both for themselves and for others coming into the building? They are obligated to work under whatever policy is decided. Joan is in the process of checking/discussing with them. Have there been any spreader events where masks and distancing were in place? Liza will look into this question.

#### 5. Guidelines for TF Decision-making Process

We reviewed the UCM Congregational Covenant, and added several other guiding principles for our discussions going forward. We will:

- Be open-minded and try to understand where those with differing opinions are coming from.
- Allow one another the time and space to process information.
- Recognize that there is no “right” answer and no one has all the answers.
- Assume good intent.
- Hold central our Mission Statement.
- In the minutes and in subsequent conversations, share the summary of our discussions without identifying individual contributions.
- Hold confidentiality of personal details.
- Focus on the welfare of the whole congregation, not on our personal opinions/beliefs.

Also noted for future reference:

- Be mindful of staff’s needs and opinions related to our work.
- Be mindful of how to hold conflicting needs, values and priorities of various groups.

As noted in our 11/10/21 meeting, membership in the TF has changed over time. Noah recently left and Peter chooses not to become an official member. Thus the balance of members at large as compared with staff/Board/ET has shifted somewhat. We need to be mindful of including all roles and interests in our process.

We did not discuss how decisions will be made after discussions. Do we want to continue to seek consensus? If we vote, who votes? It will be best if, after a decision is made, the Task Force speaks with one voice and all members support the decision.

#### 6. Other Business

(a) Air Quality Project bid requests are out; due back in early December.

(b) Liza would like to add 6-foot distancing back into the Outdoor Guidelines. We agreed. She will add the wording as of today’s date and Claudia will post the new version.

(c) Donia had emailed us that the choir has suspended in-person rehearsals for a while due to the recent spike in Covid numbers. She seeks guidance on what criteria to use for resuming in-person rehearsal/recording. Discussion was deferred because of time and because our work on the Reopening Guidelines may end up answering this question.

7. Next Meeting: Wednesday, Dec. 1st at 5:00. After that we will switch back to Thursdays.