

UCM Covid-19 Task Force Final Minutes
Twenty-fourth meeting 11/3/21

Present: Allen Clark, Liza Earle-Centers, Scott Hess (facilitating), Kris Hammer, Judith Hinds (recording), Rev. Joan, Cass Madison, Jen Matthews, Leslie Parr, Janet Poeton, Donia Prince, Peter Thoms, Meredith Warner.

Agenda:

- Changes to minutes of 10/19/21
- Changes to the agenda
- Comments/feedback from church members/community/Board/ET
- Air quality and AV update (Kris)
- Changes/exceptions to reopening guidelines
- Singing guidelines
- Protocol/policy if staff or congregant tests positive
- Other business
- Next meeting

1. Changes to Minutes

None.

2. Changes to the Agenda

Scott announced that John Bond has stepped down from the TF. We are very grateful for his service and his expertise in the health field. He is still available for consultation.

3. Feedback/Comments from Others

The ET feels OK about updating our TF charge if we want to pursue this. From the Board, Meredith and Ansel are available to work on it if a group is formed. No one expressed a sense of urgency about this. The chief concern appears to be that as a relatively large group, usually meeting every two weeks, we need to be more “nimble” in response to questions and concerns from the ET/staff. We are willing to respond to their requests as quickly as we can, using email when a meeting isn’t possible. Joan will discuss further with ET/staff to see if there is anything else they need from us, or any need to revise our charge.

4. Air Quality/AV Project Update

The AV project is proceeding well; currently waiting for final work by the electrician. Final AQ design is expected this Friday, and bids can go out next week. Bidders will submit proposals by 11/30. The actual work schedule will be developed with the selected contractor. It now appears construction will likely begin after the first of the year. In the interim, better filters will likely be added to existing furnaces to assist with air cleaning.

5. Reopening Guidelines

Ref. Link: [May 4, 2021 Reopening Guidelines](#).

Link to Cass’s presentation today:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YehZRCrJLPqmrlPmQj6FVnbt674neV2LOvtePM6-fVY/edit>

Cass showed us a chart she and Jen created listing our current reopening metrics and comparing the recommended practices of several other churches and government agencies. There seems to be general agreement that the first criterion we chose for Phase One, i.e. daily new cases at or

below 1 in 100,000 in VT, is unrealistic. It's not yet clear how much we should raise it. We will continue to discuss this question at our next meeting. Peter offered to get more details from other local churches about how they're operating and report back at our next meeting.

What are UCM's priorities? Do we want to reopen the sanctuary for Sunday services with limited attendance yet? There have been other requests for exceptions to the Reopening Guidelines that appear to be more urgent priorities than Sunday services. (See list of potential in-person activities identified by the ET, dated 10/13/21, appended to these minutes.) Can we act on any of these today?

Liza requested that we consider two of them today: "Seasoned Souls" meetings and h.s. youth group meetings. Specifically, at least one S.S. group would like to meet regularly in the Fireplace Room, and the h.s. youth group would like to hold their December meeting in the vestry, including a pizza meal. Each of these groups consists of 5-7 members. We recommend to the ET that both requests be approved with conditions: use HEPA air purification units; wear masks; observe social distancing; keep attendance under occupancy limits as agreed upon by Allen and Liza; do not attend if you have any Covid symptoms; and keep track of attendance in case contact tracing becomes necessary. Also, NO FOOD, as this would require removing masks. HEPA units must be left to run for two hours following each meeting. And, of course, schedule space use with the Office Assistant.

6. Singing Guidelines

We still do not have a full set of singing guidelines – just the basic 4-point plan approved at our 10/19/21 meeting. Based on Jen's research and recommendations, choir members are all now using either singing masks or N-95's – no more cloth masks.

Donia had emailed last week requesting two specific exceptions to the Reopening Guidelines (see text of her 10/29/21 email appended to these minutes). We recommend to the ET that both requests be approved as follows:

- (1) Allow a solo singer to record in the sanctuary unmasked, with conditions as described by Donia in her email.
- (2) Allow choir rehearsals in the vestry following the 4-point plan, using 4 HEPA filters, and limiting attendance to 25. Allen determined that 4 filters will provide the required number of air exchanges in this space. (We did not discuss the Corsi-Rosenthal boxes referred to in Donia's email. The HEPA filters should suffice.) During breaks, choir may not all congregate in the FP room; they will need to keep good distancing.

7. Protocol/Policy for Positive Tests

Was not discussed.

8. Other Business

None.

9. Next Meeting: **Wednesday, Nov. 10th, at 5:00.** (Only one week away.)

Notes from the Management Team (ET and staff) on the consideration of in-person activities inside the church building 10/13/2021

Here is the list we generated to be shared with the COVID TF:

- committee meetings

- small group activities
- seasoned souls in Fireplace Room
- choir related activities:
 - solo singer singing
 - recording of small group singing
 - unmasked, all agreed upon small group singing
 - larger group singing activities accompanied with testing
- High school youth group would like the option to meet inside occasionally
- OWL facilitators hope for meetings with 7th and 8th graders beginning in January through spring
- Up to 20 individuals in the sanctuary for informal worship services on Sunday afternoons

Some activities are already taking place in the building--for the most part all masked and distanced

- Worship Planning and Staff meetings regularly in the vestry
- LSE Committee volunteers have met one at a time with Liza to assemble care packages in the vestry or Children's Chapel
- The Monday Community Lunch pairs / team use the kitchen for meal preparation, and weekly assembling of take out meals. A small team at times for Thurs. meal assembling.
- ET met in small classroom after the A/V tour
- Friday tech rehearsals and Sun. worship with the Worship and Tech Teams
- Property Committee volunteer does a weekly walk through of the building
- A cleaning person / crew? visits 2x monthly

Thoughts about New Parameters for Re-Opening Guidelines:

- for specific gatherings, be clear about what each group is required to do.
- before certain choir singing events testing could be built into the guidelines with responsibility for testing to be clear
- Consider whether testing could have a role in our reopening guidelines
- Consider whether vaccines may be required for some people in specific roles. (Nashua church requires the entire worship team - staff and volunteers - to be vaccinated, for example. Rapid tests are quick, reliable, but not free.)

10/29/21 email from Donia:

Hi everyone,

I asked Scott if we could include 2 specific things on the agenda which he agreed to and asked that I forward the requests to all of you, to help expedite the conversation.

The first is regarding one of the requested "exemptions" to the in-church guidelines: Could we have a solo singer *record* in the Sanctuary? Preferably unmasked.

These conditions would apply:

- The singing session would be no longer than 1/2 hour
- No more than 2 other people present, remaining further than 10 ft away, and masked

-The sanctuary would not be used for 6 hours following. [According to the CDC](#), the largest aerosols drop to the ground within seconds or minutes. Smaller droplets can remain in the air for hours. The Coronavirus Resource Center at Harvard Health says they can remain airborne up to 3 hours.

-All other standard precautions--bathrooms, etc.

I actually would like to record something for the Nov 7th service in the Sanctuary (with the organ, so it would have to be the Sanctuary,) so am hoping to get an answer to this on Wednesday.

The second:

Given that we likely will not have the AQP completed until well into the winter or spring, I would like to pose the question: What would it take to be able to have choir rehearsals in the vestry (with all other precautions in place)? Can we possibly meet ventilation standards by using existing HEPA filters, with the addition possibly of making some of the [Corsi-Rosenthal boxes?](#) Here is more information on their actual performance: <https://cleanaircrew.org/ufaq/does-the-corsi-rosenthal-box-work/>. Or is there another temporary, creative solution?

This--the corsi-rosenthal boxes-- is what the Grange will be doing to help with ventilation over the winter. So you might ask, why can't we just stay at the Grange? The main reason is driving and safety. If you have been to the Grange, you know that the drive up to it is steep, narrow, unlit, rutted, and it intersects with Rte 12 at a dark and dangerous-feeling spot. We have many choir members who have already expressed a dislike of night driving. I feel it will be unsafe to ask choir members to do this once snow and ice season begins. As a practical matter, I think a good portion of the choir simply wouldn't come if there were any snow or ice on the ground, whereas they would come downtown.

An additional consideration is the cost of continued rental of the Grange (\$60/week).

I am also revisiting the possibility of Bethany church as a rehearsal spot, have started inquiries but no answers yet. A central obstacle there is that our 2 choirs rehearse at the same time, and you know how hard it is to find a new time, esp for a group of our size. With a new time, we would end up leaving some current members out.

Barbara, I am curious as well: in some recent email you said that the NB Nature Center's ventilation numbers were based on windows being open. Did you end up hearing from the engineers there? So do we know that for certain? I never did hear back from Chip but let it go since we had settled at the Grange.

Thanks for considering these questions! And see you Wednesday.

Donia