



# STEPPING FORWARD SAFELY COVID 19 MITIGATION PLAN

**AS OF MAY 20, 2021**

By refraining from in-person worship, our churches have fully embraced John Wesley's three simple rules — DO NO HARM. DO GOOD. STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD. But now, after 15 months of virtual worship and limited in-person gatherings, we are entering into a new season of gathering together. The following plan has been developed in accordance with the Stepping Forward Safely in Love and Trust document released May 5, 2021 by the Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church and has a commitment from the pastor and leadership of our churches.

This is a living document. CDC guidelines have changed and will continue to change as more is understood about the virus. Even since the Greater Northwest Area document came out there are new CDC recommendations for mask-wearing which organizations are struggling to implement. We know that more and more people will get vaccinated. We know comfort levels with restrictions will change. We know that we'll find things that need to be adapted for our specific settings and even for specific events. This is not a "forever" document.

But, as we begin gathering, our goal is for everyone to feel welcomed, loved, and safe.

## **GUIDELINES FOR BOTH INDOOR AND OUTDOOR GATHERINGS**

***Indoor gatherings (including worship, small groups, meetings, outside user groups, youth activities) are permitted, as allowed by state and local restrictions, with the following measures in place:***

- Masks over mouth and nose required for all participants over the age of 2
  - Exceptions to mask-wearing guidelines:
    - Worship leaders/speakers who are fully vaccinated may remove masks when actively leading worship/speaking and while maintaining appropriate distance from congregation (which will have unvaccinated individuals)
    - "Closed groups" where it is known that all persons are vaccinated may remove masks. "Closed groups" are not open to the public or have little chance of a non-vaccinated person entering (e.g. a leadership council meeting, a small group meeting, people working together in the church office)
    - Congregants may lift up masks to partake in Holy Communion and then again put masks over mouth and nose.
- Six plus feet of physical distancing between households.
  - Exceptions to physical distancing requirement:

- Baptism/Laying on of hands — Leaders/Participants may break the “six foot” distancing guideline for Baptism and Laying on of Hands
- Holy Communion
- Individuals who are in the same “COVID bubble” may sit together.
- Vaccinated individuals may sit together (still keeping masks on)
- Facility will have as much ventilation as comfortable (doors/windows open as weather permits)
- Signs will be posted encouraging mask wearing and hand washing and distancing.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided and encouraged.
- Non-touch greetings will be encouraged (e.g. waves, “air hugs,”) )
- No food sharing or communal meals inside except for Holy Communion. (Leadership will pay attention to guidelines to determine when we can return to “fellowship times” or “pot-lucks”.)
- There is no congregational singing. You can see guidelines on this [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). This is in recognition that singing, while one of the most rewarding parts of congregational worship, is also the most risky for spreading COVID among unvaccinated persons. We will continue to monitor guidance on singing and look forward to singing again.
- Singing is **only** allowed in an “indoor chorus” of fully vaccinated individuals who may sing without masks. This is a “closed group” that is not open to the public or has little chance of a non-vaccinated person entering. This is in accordance with [CDC guidelines](#).
- Limiting events to no more than 60 minutes in length

***Outdoor Gatherings: (including worship, small groups, meetings, outside user groups, youth activities) are permitted, as allowed by state and local restrictions, with the following measures in place:***

- Outdoor gatherings are different. There is much less risk of COVID transmission outside. However, it is not risk-free and we need to be aware that we’ll have unvaccinated people with us.
- Masks over mouth and nose recommended for all persons and required for all non-vaccinated attendees over the age of 2
  - Exceptions:
    - Worship leaders/speakers may remove masks when actively leading worship or speaking and while maintaining appropriate distance with from others
    - Closed groups where it is known that all persons are vaccinated may remove masks
    - When eating/drinking
- Six plus feet of physical distancing between households.
- Serving/eating food is allowed.
  - Encourage people to bring their own food (e.g. “Brown Bag” lunch)
  - If food is provided, limit the number of people serving food to limit chances of transmission.
  - Limit the number of people gathering at the serving area.
  - Use disposable food service items.
- Congregational singing is allowed with social distancing and mask-wearing.

- No time limit for event.

This document will be updated as guidelines change. We'll be paying particular attention to singing guidelines and how to incorporate the new CDC guidelines for mask-wearing when we have a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the pastor of Seward and Moose Pass UMC ([sewardumc@gmail.com](mailto:sewardumc@gmail.com)).