

May 28, 2021

Friends,

Summer is here, with all the possibilities and hope it brings! We are also celebrating new guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as of mid-May relaxing most COVID-19 safety recommendations for fully-vaccinated people. See the back of this letter for the CDC's updated safe activity chart.

Among the changes: the CDC now says that fully-vaccinated people do not need to wear masks in public spaces, that they can gather safely for worship, and that singing in choruses is safe. *Note that these activities are still considered less safe for unvaccinated people, even with face masks.*

Although this change seems sudden, the CDC based it upon updated, ongoing research. Fully-vaccinated people are at very low risk of transmitting the disease. In the few cases where vaccinated people contract COVID-19, the severity of the illness is generally greatly reduced. Also, there is growing evidence that the existing vaccines are effective against some of the emerging COVID-19 variants. You can read more, including links to the science, here... <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

The CDC emphasizes that local guidance and recommendations should still be observed. The La Crosse County Health Department and the Coulee COVID-19 Collaborative still rated our local risk level at "medium" as of May 23 and recommended caution in gathering and singing... <https://lacrossecounty.org/couleecovid19>

Onalaska UMC's COVID team met May 20 and updated our policies for church. Our goal remains the same – to be cautious and care for the least and most vulnerable among us, as Jesus would do. We will be phasing in changes slowly to ensure that we don't cause harm. We also listened to feedback from church members in prioritizing changes:

June 1 **Masks will be optional for fully-vaccinated people.** *Those who are not fully-vaccinated still need to wear masks to protect themselves and our friends who have health or immune issues that make them particularly vulnerable.*



June 8 **OUMC will host a free COVID vaccination clinic** with the Health Department. Details TBA.

July 4 **Congregational singing can resume in the sanctuary.** *This is tentative pending updated county guidance and assuming we don't see an adverse impact from previous changes.*



July 25 **No pre-registration required for Sunday worship.** *This is tentative and is scheduled so that those who are vaccinated June 8 have time for their second shot plus two weeks for full effectiveness. We will still encourage safe distancing in the pews.*



We will continue other safety practices, and continue to offer livestream worship for both the 8:30a Classic and 11:00a Praise services, so that you have options to participate in church that are safe and comfortable for you. Our summer plans, including youth events and VBS, are being adapted for safety and fun as well.

Praise God, who has been steadfast throughout this challenging time! And thank you for supporting OUMC as we care for all God's people. "Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you... I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face-to-face" (3 John 1:5,14 NIV).

Wes Panzer,
Council Chair

Megan Barbian, RN,
Lay Leader

Becky Barnes,
Stephen Leader

Mark Beahm, MD,
COVID-19 Team

Rev. M. Park Hunter
Pastor

COVID-19 Response Team: Megan Barbian, Becky Barnes, Mark Beahm, Paul Bratsch, Jessica Gobel, Park Hunter, Sandy Koster, Jeff Moorhouse

Choosing Safer Activities

Accessible link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html>

	Unvaccinated People	Examples of Activities	Fully Vaccinated People
		Outdoor	
Safest		Walk, run, wheelchair roll, or bike outdoors with members of your household	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated family and friends	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people	
Less Safe		Dine at an outdoor restaurant with friends from multiple households	
Least Safe		Attend a crowded, outdoor event, like a live performance, parade, or sports event	
		Indoor	
Less Safe		Visit a barber or hair salon	
		Go to an uncrowded, indoor shopping center or museum	
		Attend a small, indoor gathering of fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people from multiple households	
Least Safe		Go to an indoor movie theater	
		Attend a full-capacity worship service	
		Sing in an indoor chorus	
		Eat at an indoor restaurant or bar	
		Participate in an indoor, high intensity exercise class	

Get a COVID-19 vaccine



Prevention measures not needed



Take prevention measures

Wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart, and wash your hands.

- Safety levels assume the recommended prevention measures are followed, both by the individual and the venue (if applicable).
- CDC cannot provide the specific risk level for every activity in every community. It is important to consider your own personal situation and the risk to you, your family, and your community before venturing out.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html> (May 13, 2021)

For OUMC's current COVID-19 guidance, see our website... <http://www.onalaskaumc.org/covid-19/>