

COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for In-Person Gatherings Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ

Following are the COVID-19 safety guidelines for all in-person gatherings sponsored by the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ (“the Conference”), approved by the Board of Directors on November 5, 2022 and until further notice. This document also contains guidelines and policy for the Conference office and Conference staff engagement in the Conference during this same period. The health and safety of our staff, volunteers, and program participants remain our top priorities. We will continue to examine and may modify these guidelines to reflect any updates to public health recommendations and guidance from the CDC, Minnesota Department of Health, and the American Camping Association. [CDC COVID-19 Community Levels will provide the primary frame by which safety protocol decisions will be made.](#)

Participation in public activities such as those offered by the Conference pose some level of risk to COVID-19 transmission. Participants choosing to engage in Conference activities assume that risk.

In the interest of public health & as a sign of the Gospel mandate to love our neighbor, the Minnesota Conference UCC strongly urges all members eligible for vaccination to be vaccinated unless their doctor advises otherwise.

In-Person Gatherings/Meetings with No Overnight Stay

- Vaccination against COVID-19 is strongly encouraged, but not required, for participants in Conference-sponsored meetings or gatherings with no overnight stay.
- Wearing of face masks is optional. Individuals who have underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk are especially encouraged to wear masks. Any individuals choosing to wear a mask will be supported in doing so. Participants are encouraged to wear a face mask when the event takes place in a “medium” community level area according to the CDC. Events taking place in an area where a “high” community level of COVID is indicated by the CDC will require the wearing of masks (or may be cancelled or moved to virtual only).
- Participants are encouraged to follow good basic handwashing & respiratory etiquette. Handwashing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water should be done frequently throughout the day. Hand sanitizer will also be made available in shared spaces. Individuals will cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Many Conference sponsored meetings and indoor gatherings will be offered in a hybrid format, allowing participants to join in-person or online (via Zoom or livestream). When possible and reasonable, online meeting platforms such as Zoom may be utilized to convene meetings of Conference committees, teams, and work groups.

Overnight Events (retreats, outdoor ministry & youth events, Annual Meeting, and other programs)

- Individuals attending overnight events are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before doing so.

- To be considered fully vaccinated, an individual's vaccination series (not including boosters) must be completed at least 14 days prior to the start date of the event they will attend.
- Individuals who are symptomatic and have suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should not attend these events. Those who have been knowingly exposed to COVID should test prior to the event. If the individual is asymptomatic and the test result is negative, the individual may attend the event but is encouraged to mask. If the individual is symptomatic, regardless of whether they test positive or negative, they should not attend the event.
- Masking while attending overnight events will be optional. Those choosing to wear masks for any reason will be supported in doing so. Masking may be required if an event is held in an area where the CDC COVID-19 Community Level is medium, and required where the CDC COVID-19 community level is high at the time of the event. Conference staff will make every effort to notify registered participants of protocols prior to the event.
- Participants are encouraged to follow good basic handwashing & respiratory etiquette. Hand-washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water should be done frequently throughout the day. Hand sanitizer will also be made available in shared spaces. Individuals will cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Conference staff will follow strict quarantine and assessment protocols (as outlined by the CDC, MDH, and ACA) for any participant exhibiting symptoms of illness, and a participant exhibiting symptoms may be required to leave the event early.
- Conference staff will closely monitor [CDC COVID-19 Community Levels](#) in counties where host sites are located and may cancel events or adjust safety protocols where a "high" community level is present.
- In the event of the postponement or cancellation of an event due to COVID-19 concerns or other issues, a full refund of registrations fees paid will be issued to participants.

Conference Office & Staff Engagement Protocols

The Minnesota Conference UCC is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and volunteers. To ensure we have a safe and healthy workplace, we have developed the following COVID-19 Plan in response to ongoing concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal is to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our office and among our Conference members, which requires full cooperation among our staff, volunteers, & members.

Office Protocol

- **All employees of the Minnesota Conference UCC will be vaccinated.** The Conference will make every effort to accommodate employees with either medical conditions or religious objections that cause them not to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.
- **The following procedures will be utilized in the Conference Office:**
 - Handwashing & sanitization: staff are instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day. Hand sanitizer will also be available in the office for each employee's use.
 - Respiratory etiquette: Staff will cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Tissues should be disposed of in trash receptacles provided and hands immediately washed or sanitized after coughing or sneezing.

- **In instances when an employee has been exposed to COVID-19, the following protocols will be followed:** (Contact is defined as spending a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more within 6 feet of an infectious person, unless there was a physical barrier between them, such as a cubicle wall or full Plexiglas screen, or all people were using a face covering and face shield.)
 - The employee should contact their health care provider and get tested for COVID-19. The employee should then stay isolated at home and away from others until test results are available.
 - The employee who tests negative may return to work when symptoms improve.
 - The employee who tests positive for COVID-19 will provide proof of that test result to their supervisor and Conference Minister. They can return when the following return-to-work (RTW) criteria are met:
 - Symptomatic employees should stay isolated at home and away from others until all three of these are true: 1) Symptoms have improved; AND 2) It has been 5 days since symptoms started; AND 3) They have been fever-free for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications)
 - Asymptomatic employees who test positive after travel, an exposure, or routine surveillance testing should isolate at home for 5 days from their test date. Asymptomatic employees should consult with their supervisor and may be requested to work remotely during the quarantine period.
 - No medical exam or additional testing is necessary to clear employees for work once they meet the RTW criteria.
- **Visits of staff to member churches**
 - Staff members are encouraged to monitor the CDC COVID-19 community levels of the county where churches to be visited are located. A staff member may decline to visit a church if that church is in a “high” community level area. Staff members should consult with their supervisor about any concerns related to an in-person visit to member churches.
 - Staff members are encouraged to wear a face mask if visiting a church in a “medium” community level area as well as other precautions advised by the CDC. Staff members visiting a church in a “high” community level area are required to wear a mask during their visit.
- **Zoom Technology:**
 - Zoom technology or phone calls may be utilized by staff for meetings with Conference members and others when it is deemed most convenient or safe, while still allowing for work productivity.