



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

May 27, 2021

Dear Friends,

Florida Mission Center Leadership has received the attached letter from the USA Apostles. It states that mission center presidents and pastors may collaborate from this time forward to determine local policies and procedures for in-person congregational gatherings during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. Your mission center officers continue to monitor new case data, positive test rates, hospitalizations, deaths, CDC guidance, and state government guidelines. At this time, it seems clear that the coronavirus is primarily spread through the air in enclosed spaces, those vaccinated are protected significantly from contracting and transmitting the virus, and all people ages 12 and older are eligible to receive a vaccine, which is widely available.

In response to recent updates, the following basic guidelines are recommended in the FMC. Congregation leaders should meet with each other and with your congregants to discuss the changes and address questions and concerns as you decide how you will resume in-person activities. The attached CDC chart was used as a reference for the following guidelines and is recommended, along with the March world church guidelines, as a resource for reopening.

FMC GUIDELINES

Outdoor Gatherings:

Effective Saturday, May 29, all congregations in the Florida Mission Center will be permitted to gather outdoors for worship and other outdoor events without restrictions. When gathering outdoors it will not be necessary to wear masks or adhere to other procedures previously shared for gatherings. It would be acceptable to sing and distribute items such as offering baskets, handouts, or bread & wine for communion when gathering outdoors. Food may also be served and consumed in group settings outdoors. All sacraments may be performed outdoors. Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations should be provided when having meals and serving communion. Masks should be available for those that may choose to wear them. Those entering the building for any reason should wear a mask. Persons unvaccinated for COVID-19, those with compromised immune systems, and others may still choose to wear a mask and social distance.



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Indoor Gatherings:

Also, effective Saturday, May 29, all congregations in the Florida Mission Center will be permitted to gather for worship experiences indoors **if** attendees wear masks and congregational singing does not take place. Unfortunately, new cases in many counties and in Florida overall are still above the 10 per 100,000 threshold and mitigation strategies are still needed. Many people in our community are not yet at the level of full immunity when masks are no longer necessary per CDC guidance. It would be permissible for those leading the service that are fully vaccinated to remove their mask while speaking and then place their mask back on when done speaking. Also, special music may be sung by vocalists that are fully vaccinated. Speakers can share microphones without a mask if they are fully vaccinated.

Additionally, food and drinks should not be served indoors at this time. Masks and hand sanitizer should still be available for attendees that need them. The attached sign should still be posted on entrance doors. Steps to improve ventilation (see attached handout for options) should still be taken.

It is no longer necessary to gather contact information from attendees. There is no longer a requirement to sanitize surfaces before or after gatherings, or to limit the time of indoor gatherings. The use of bulletins, hymnals (to read), offering baskets, and communion trays for serving bread & wine is also acceptable. All sacraments may be performed indoors provided participants wear masks (other than a person being baptized or while partaking of communion).

We recognize that requiring masks and refraining from congregational singing indoors is not required by state order and is no longer a CDC recommendation for those who are vaccinated. However, to avoid separate guidelines for those that are and those that are not fully vaccinated, we feel in our community it is best to maintain the most cautious approach at this time. If new cases continue to decline and vaccination rates continue to increase, we hope to soon advise lifting the mask requirement, and allow for group singing and the sharing of food and drinks indoors.

In summary, all congregations may meet outdoors with no restrictions or indoors with the restrictions of wearing masks, not engaging in congregation singing, and not serving food and drinks effective this Saturday, May 29, 2021. Reopening plans no longer need to be submitted for approval. Congregations are strongly encouraged to dialogue about the transition back to in-person gatherings in advance with leaders and members to ensure that questions are answered, and tensions are addressed. Congregations that would like to maintain a more cautious approach with additional restrictions due to local conditions or vulnerable populations attending may do so in consultation with the MCP Team. The principles in the previously released guidelines (found here <https://www.cofchristfmc.org/covid-19.html>) for gatherings



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should continue to be a helpful guide when questions may arise. Please contact Debbie Bartlett, fmcbartlett@gmail.com or (407) 977-4288, with any questions you may have.

Our prayers continue for the health and safety of you and your loved ones during this time of great disruption, grief, and loss around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope this updated guidance will be good news for many in our mission center and will serve as a step toward improving emotional and mental health for those who have been isolated from the community physically for so long. Blessings for all in the gatherings to come!

Ken Campbell, Chuck Petz, Mark Dixon
Mission Center Presidents

cc: Apostle Barbara Carter
Carrie Welch
Mission Center Council

