

Stepwise Plan for Reentry Task Force

Rev. Oscar Sinclair, Unitarian Church of Lincoln

March 2021

Guiding Principles

Congregational safety is a core duty of church leadership. Beyond that, our decision making is guided by our Unitarian Universalist faith, which proclaims:

- There is intrinsic value in the act of gathering as a community. Whether in person or online, our faith is strengthened by being together.
- Each person is the expert on their own life, and their own risk tolerances.
- Each person in our community has inherent worth and dignity, so we have a collective responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us.
- Our lives are interconnected, so we will work to provide the same opportunities to all congregants.

Safety Response Team

The Safety Response Team is described in the Unitarian Church of Lincoln's Safety Policy,¹ and consists of the following staff, members, and clergy of the Unitarian Church of Lincoln:

Minister:	Rev. Oscar Sinclair
President:	Trevor Jones
Vice President:	Lori Straatmann
Treasurer:	Theresa Foresman
Program Council Chair:	Karen Heafer
Administrative Director:	Jean Helms

Summary

Beginning Sunday April 4, the Unitarian Church of Lincoln will begin the process of reentering our building at 6300 A St. This reentry process will use the Lincoln Lancaster County COVID-19 risk dial as its primary metric, beginning with outdoor activities and continuing through a full reentry when the dial is set to 'green.' UCL's Safety Response Team is authorized to approve each step, based on conditions in Lancaster County.

This plan is a living document. The course of the pandemic over the last year has changed many times, and the Safety Response team will continue to monitor the effects of variants & vaccine rates for adults and children, and will take new information into account as it becomes available.

¹ From the Safety Policy: "Members of the Safety Response Team will be the five members of the Executive Committee (Minister, President of the Board of Trustees, Vice President, Treasurer, Program Council Chairperson). The Safety Response Team may ask others to serve, depending on need for special competencies." Given the frequent overlap between safety issues and building issues, we have generally asked our Administrative Director to be part of these deliberations and will continue that practice for the purposes of Reentry planning.

Steps: County Risk Dial

Step A: Orange & High Yellow²

Worship	Online worship, filmed by 1-2 people in sanctuary.
Small Groups	Online only
Children's RGL	Online RGL
Office	Staff primarily works from home.

Step B: Mid Yellow

Worship	Piloting outdoor worship, with primary worship on Sunday AM online.
Small Groups	Small groups can meet outdoors with advance notice.
Children's RGL	Online RGL
Office	Staff continues to primarily work from home, gatherings of 3-5 people in building for staff tasks allowed with distancing, masks.

Step C: Low Yellow

Worship	Piloting hybrid indoor worship at 25% capacity (37), continued outdoor worship opportunities. Piano, no singing.
Small Groups	Small groups (<15) can meet in person in gallery with advance notice, while maintaining 6ft distance & masks.
Children's RGL	Start piloting in person & hybrid Sunday School.
Office	Staff has option to work from home or building, one on one meetings in building with agreement of both people, all-staff meetings continue on Zoom.

Step D: Low Yellow and Vaccines in Phase 2B³

Worship	Indoor worship at 50% capacity (75 ppl), 1x/Sunday. Fully hybrid, continued occasional outdoor worship. Piano, no singing, until guidance is updated.
Small Groups	Small groups can meet in person, with masks.
Children's RGL	Start piloting in person & hybrid Sunday School. ⁴
Office	Staff primarily working from building, staff meetings in person with hybrid option.

Step E: Green

Worship	Worship at full capacity, 2x/Sunday, Fully hybrid (9:00 service livestreamed), singing and choir at discretion of worship, choir leaders
Small Groups	Small groups can meet in person.
Children's RGL	In person Sunday School, procedures TBA.
Office	Staff primarily working from building, staff meetings in person with hybrid option.

² If Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department COVID Risk Dial is at red, church building use is kept to a minimum, recording paused and all work that can be done remotely done so.

³ At Phase 2B, all Nebraskans over the age of 16 are eligible to receive the vaccine. As of this draft (3/24/21), Nebraska is in stage 2A, and the state anticipates Phase 2B beginning in May 2021. Both conditions (vaccine availability and LLCHD Dial) should be met for Step D.

⁴ Our capacity to host in person RGL on Sunday morning is highly dependent on the number of lay volunteers for the program.

Decision Tree

The Safety Response Team will strive for consensus in our decision making. If something does not “feel right,” to a member of the Safety Response Team, we will listen and seriously consider those reservations. In cases where consensus is not possible, a 2/3 majority of safety team members present will be required to move the congregation to a different stage.

Step Down

If: COVID-19 Risk Dial, updated on Tuesday afternoon at <https://app.lincoln.ne.gov/city/covid19/>, moves to a lower range;

Then: Minister emails Safety Team on Tuesday night, with proposed step-down stage and effective date.

Then: Decision made by Safety Team, with the goal of consensus.

Communication: The decision of the Safety Team is communicated to the congregation by next available eBlast & Daily Update.

Example: On April 13, Lancaster County reports the risk dial is now at ‘Low Yellow.’ Minister emails safety team, proposing the congregation step down to ‘Step C,’ effective April 19. Safety team meets via Zoom on April 14 and reaches consensus. The eBlasts on April 15-16 contain information about what the new step entails.

Step Up

If: Weekly case rate in Lancaster county, measured on Sunday, moves to higher range;

Then: Minister emails Safety Team on Tuesday night, with proposed step-up stage and effective date.

Then: Decision made by Safety Team, with the goal of consensus.

Communication: The decision of the Safety Team is communicated to the congregation by next available eBlast & Daily Update.

Example: After several weeks of Step C, the congregation is piloting hybrid worship. A new variant in Lincoln causes the county to announce on May 11 that the risk dial is now at “orange.” The safety team meets via Zoom on May 12 and reaches consensus. The eBlast on May 13 announces the new stage, and we move back to online worship until the dial drops again.

Works Consulted

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- Chin, Daniel. “Where Two or More Are Vaccinated: Advice for Churches in 2021,” *Christianity Today*, January 27, 2021. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/january-web-only/church-reopening-vaccine-coronavirus-covid-advice.html>
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- Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth, “Draft #3.0 Pandemic Guidelines, 22 August 2020.” <https://www.uua.org/files/2021-01/Duluth%20Pandemic%20Guidelines.pdf>

⁵ Note Table 1, “CDC Indicators and Thresholds for Community Transmission of COVID-19.”

