

Summer 2021 Plans for Unitarian Church of Lincoln

Rev. Oscar Sinclair, March 30, 2021

Introduction

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Lancaster County is proceeding rapidly, and unless current trends reverse, we anticipate returning to in person worship in some capacity in May 2021. This presents a challenge for congregational leaders and staff, who have been operating at sustained crisis-response pace since March 2020. Most of our staff members have not had meaningful time off in over a year. In most years, summer is our time to rest, reset, and plan for the coming congregational year, beginning in September. What follows is a proposal to balance the desire of many congregants to begin meeting in person with our capacity as leaders and professional staff.

Mid April-Mid June

Our proposed reentry plan includes two steps between the current status quo and full reopening:

Step C: Low Yellow

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Worship | Piloting hybrid indoor worship at 25% capacity (37 ppl), 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 & Vaccines in Phase 2B

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 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. |
| Office | Staff primarily working from building, staff meetings in person with hybrid option. |

Our working assumption is that it is unlikely that the risk dial will move to "Green" prior to September 1. If, however, the increased distribution of vaccine doses in Lancaster County results in the risk dial moving to and staying in Low Yellow, we could be into Step C as early as mid-April, and Step D as soon as Nebraska moves into phase 2B of their vaccine distribution plan (currently scheduled for early May).

Practically, during the final months of the congregational year (May and June), we will be experimenting with meeting in person for worship. These will start out outdoors, and may not be weekly until June, but will be an opportunity to refine our hybrid worship approach. It is likely

that our full hybrid AV setup will not be installed by then,¹ so this period may also be livestream on a more ad hoc basis than the fall. Our congregational year finishes on June 20 with Flower Communion.

July and August Sunday Worship

Beginning on June 27th with the UUA's General Assembly Sunday worship service, followed by the Prairie UU Summer Worship Cooperative in July and August, we have committed to participate in online worship through the summer.

During this time, we will host 'watch parties' at 6300 A St, playing the worship services on the projector in the sanctuary. Our focus as a staff and leadership during these Sundays will be on the logistics of worship- how do we move people in and out of the space, manage reservations, greet, ushers, and clean?

July and August Thursday Vespers

The recent congregational survey on reentry included several responses requesting that we continue Zoom services at this time. Over July and August, the Worship Associates will lead a zoom-based Vespers series on Thursday nights. We will reevaluate zoom-based Vespers in the fall.

UCL Summer Emergence Series

After a year of relative isolation, the priority for the church is interacting with each other- a need that may be better met through social events than worship services. While we participate in 'watch parties' with the Summer Worship Cooperative, UCL will also host a "UCL Summer Emergence" series. These events will be intentionally social, intergenerational, and primarily outdoors. As part of the series, there will be opportunities for arts and crafts, games, and worship. While this is a work in progress, each of the following events has a staff member identified to coordinate and lead the event:

June 12 (Saturday afternoon): "Hot Ones" style interview with UCL Staff

June 13 (Sunday morning): Outdoor New Member & Bridging Service

June 20 (Sunday morning): Outdoor Flower Ceremony & Closing the Congregational Year

July 10 (Saturday morning) : UCL Congregational Softball Game

July 18 (Sunday after church): Fundraiser to create RGL Mosaic

July 22 or 29 (Thursday night): Vespers at Antelope Park, with A Street Band

August 7 (Saturday morning): UCL Talent Show

August 19 (Thursday night): Third Thursday at 6300 A Street, with A Street Band

¹ Rev. Sinclair met with Midwest Sound & AV on 3/23, with a quote still pending. Hardware shortages and high demand have impacted their business, and the quote will include a timeline for installation.

August 22 (Sunday afternoon): Lawn Games at 6300 A Street.

Going forward, we will work to add details to these events, pursue a few other possible events, and investigate logistical support and any expenses for the series.