

April 29, 2021



Last March as the coronavirus began to move across the country, our spiritual communities moved into a virtual world, finding creative ways to stay engaged with people and continue to provide services and support. Many are now considering opening up again and are desirous of doing so in a way that supports everyone's well-being.

UWM hosted a connection space call on April 12, 2021, to share ideas and consider this question together. You can access a recording of this call on our [Connection Space webpage](#) under the heading "Ministry Going Forward." Highlights from that call are included in this document.

Four Pillars for Opening Up

The World Economic Forum recommends four pillars to support a safe and smooth transition to the workplace. These pillars also provide some key points for spiritual communities to consider. They are paraphrased below:

1. **Conduct a risk assessment.** Make yourself aware of infection rates for your area and the recommendations of health and government officials. Take into consideration the risks to your population and your facilities to discern how and if you can reopen safely.
2. **Prepare/strategize in advance.** Create a written plan that supports the well-being of everyone including social distancing, good hygiene, and masks, and ensure that leaders are educated and trained to implement the plan.
3. **Adopt a phased approach to reopening.** Limit opening up to numbers and activities, adding more activities and increasing numbers as risk diminishes.
4. **Overcommunicate.** Communicate frequently using multiple avenues of communication while providing opportunities for questions and feedback.

Effective Actions Taken by Unity Communities

- **Ensuring for safety and well-being**
 - Take reservations to ensure numbers are limited.
 - Require masks and social distancing - modeled by leadership.
 - Ensure that seating meets current CDC recommendations by removing chairs or blocking off some seats.
 - Having hand sanitizer available throughout your facilities.
 - If you have two services, use separate entrances to enter and exit the sanctuary.

- **Phased approach**
 - Host watch parties for small groups to watch Sunday service together—with masks and social distancing.
 - Hold outdoor services.
 - Have one live service per month.

A Special Note About Self-Care

This has been a challenging year and many of our leaders have been working extra hours and not taking vacation. As we open up, many are looking at hybrids of live and virtual services. This can entail a significant amount of extra work. If you do not have people to support you well for a hybrid service, we invite you to consider choosing waiting to reopen.

Mandating Vaccines

There is a great deal of complexity and ambiguity regarding mandated vaccinations, and UWM recommends against making vaccinations mandatory. People will make different choices about vaccinations, and we will all need to find ways to support one another's health and individual choices.

The EEOC and CDC appear to acknowledge that mandatory vaccinations are permissible under federal law, provided employers allow for medical and religious exemptions. State and local laws around mandatory vaccines vary and should be consulted as well. HIPAA regulations regarding confidentiality around health issues must also be considered.

Other Resources

CDC: [Considerations for Community Based Organizations](#)

World Economic Forum: [How the post-COVID workplace will change business for the better](#) |

Nathan Kirkpatrick: [Greeting our return when the old is gone and the new is here](#)