

Online worship and programming to continue

At a special meeting on August 4th, the Prudential Committee voted to:

- continue to offer virtual worship and programming through at least the end of calendar year 2020.
- invest in initiatives to strengthen First Unitarian while our campus remains closed.

Following are the recommendations presented to the Prudential Committee by our Bridging Team, a group of 18 First U members and staff who are meeting weekly during the summer to study the complex health and safety issues involved in the decision of whether or not to reopen our campus and under what conditions.

Bridging Team members include David Anthony MD MPH, Cheryl Bartholomew, Michael Cappelli, Jim Cowan MD MPH, Nancy Forsstrom, Bev Koteff, Bill Koteff, Steven McCloy MD, Rev. Liz Lerner Maclay, Odile Mattiauda, Ted Martin, Jonathan Niles, Martha Rice Sanders, Cynthia Rosengard, Norma Rossi Mead, Jack Rusley MD, Cathy Seggel, and Bill Twaddell.

Foundation for Decisions

Our response to the current challenges and opportunities of the pandemic is grounded in our UU Principles, especially these three:

- The essential worth and dignity of every human being
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

With our UU Principles as the foundation, we are guided by science and medicine and committed to:

- prioritizing the health and safety of all those we serve
- strengthening the dynamism of our congregation
- serving and supporting the needs and safety of our larger community

In this time of pandemic, First Unitarian has a lot to offer – as individual members and friends, together as a congregation, and as an institution with a resilient history and a strong financial foundation. With so much capacity and the bedrock of our principles, it is not enough for us to weather this storm with care and circumspection. We must do more to help both our church's people and our larger communities come through this storm as strongly as possible. Let us be some of the helpers people look to for aid and

hope. Even with our individual struggles in this time, as a church we can make a difference now when every good thing matters more than ever.

Continue Virtually

For the foreseeable future, we recommend that First Unitarian's primary ministries continue virtually. Based on consultation with senior church staff, we recommend the following operating standards for these ministries for the 2020-2021 church year:

Worship – Worship will be online, with the goal of webcasting from the Meeting House as soon as we are set up to do so. When webcasting from the Meeting House, only worship associates, ministers, program professionals such as music director and membership coordinator, building staff, audio visual personnel, and laity as required may attend in person to present or support worship services while following the latest social distancing guidance.

Faith Development for Children, Youth and Families – Programming will be virtual with occasional on-site preparation by the Director of Religious Education, DRE assistant, youth music director and/or Spiritual Pathways Team members as required while following latest social distancing guidance.

Small Group Ministry – Chalice and Soul Circles will continue to meet online for monthly facilitation along with bi-weekly group sessions. Periodic group trainings will remain virtual. New groups will be opening up for wider participation.

Pastoral Care and Lay Ministry – Under the direction of the assistant minister for pastoral care, the Lay Ministry Team will meet virtually for facilitation and learning as they continue to assist with routine pastoral care. Rides, meals, cards and such, provided by volunteers from the Care Crew, will continue to be managed via an online database. Parishioners will be encouraged to re/connect with the First U Buddy Program, which will require the online database.

Membership – Membership will develop new material to welcome online visitors and foster virtual opportunities for building connections for newcomers and well as members through coffee hour sessions, orientation classes, and drop-in virtual gatherings. First Unitarian membership book signing by appointment will be encouraged.

Administration, Church Management – The church administrative staff will work onsite and offsite, as needed.

Building Maintenance – Repairs will be made, allowed by diminished building use. We will begin to accumulate supplies for cleaning and sanitation as/when spaces reopen.

Initiatives to strengthen First U

Beginning now and until it is deemed safe to reopen our campus, we recommend that the following initiatives be pursued to strengthen our faith community both internally and beyond.

Streaming worship services: Strengthen and broaden our reach by producing higher-quality streamed worship services commensurate with a church of our size and stature. Invest in the video and audio equipment, sound board, and training needed to produce a high-quality worship service that is easily accessible to all.

New church management and accounting system: Our current church management and accounting software system is old and no longer supported. We need a modern, cloud-based system that maintains the church database, provides the reports needed by our staff and board, and integrates easily with other office systems. The Technology Team is currently working with our church administrator and staff to determine specific staff needs, costs, and logistics.

Upgrade office information infrastructure: The church office computers are old, obsolete, no longer supported, and need to be replaced. Office environment systems including email, document storage, internal staff communications, and other office systems are also old, out of date, and need to be upgraded, cloud-based, integrated, and accessible to church staff offsite as well as in the office. The Technology Team is currently working with our church administrator and staff to determine specific staff needs, costs, and logistics.

Purchase masks: Get “1st U 4 You” masks made, make them available to congregants, and give them out at Food Pantry and Loaves and Fishes visits to offer meaningful resources within and beyond our community, with branding to help spread awareness of our congregation and values.

Zoom accounts: Purchase Zoom accounts for lay leaders who regularly convene church groups, teams, or committees.

Zoom training: Hold online training sessions for effectively using Zoom.

Online access: Provide connectivity to members who need internet service in order to participate in worship and other church activities.

Work continues

The Bridging Team continues its work to determine and recommend to the Prudential Committee a process for reopening the spaces in our campus for meeting of smaller groups, including the community groups who rent our space and church committees and groups.