

How First Church of Lombard UCC is Keeping Children and Youth Safe From COVID-19

As of August 2021

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL AGES

1. **First and foremost, we are paying attention!** These guidelines are being written using all the direction available as of this writing, with sources as wide-ranging as the CDC, the state of Illinois, the United Church of Christ, and First Church of Lombard's own previously adopted guidelines. And we are continuing to listen, which means that these policies are subject to change as the situation develops. *While these guidelines are thus intended to be reviewed as needed, our expectation is that these parameters will remain accurate for the time being. Be watching for any updates.*
2. Our primary concern is demonstrating agapē love in all we do – which right now, often includes staying home if we are not feeling well. **Parents are responsible for monitoring the health of their students and keeping children and teens at home if they are feeling unwell, have a fever, or any other symptoms that may be COVID-related.** No additional health checks will be performed upon arrival at the class/meeting.
3. Attendance records for in-person events will be carefully kept to help with contact tracing. ***If someone in your household tests positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of attending an FCL function, please contact both Val Sutton (vsutton@firstchurchoflombard.org) and Pastor Jill Terpstra (PastorJill@firstchurchoflombard.org) immediately.*** We will follow the direction of the health department at that time.
4. **Masks will be required for all non-vaccinated people at all programming inside the church building.** Mask must properly cover nose and mouth. Pending vaccination rates within the group and/or any changes in church, state or other guidelines, we may expand this requirement to all those present when indoors, and may even extend the mask requirement to outdoor activities. Be watching for updates.
5. **We will all work together to maintain physical distancing, based on the recommended three (3) feet of distance from others.** Maintaining that distance may require changing meeting spaces/classrooms, either semi-permanently or on a meeting-by-meeting basis. Be watching for information directing students to different spaces – or even outdoors.
6. **Activities will be planned with distancing in mind.** For example, if students are put in small groups or pairs for a game or discussion, enough space will be allowed to ensure that at least a 3-foot radius can be maintained. *See ministry-specific guidelines for more details.*
7. **Hand sanitizer will be available in every area where groups are meeting and frequent use will be encouraged, especially upon arrival.** Handshakes, hugs, and similar greetings will not be allowed, with alternatives suggested.
8. **Snacks, when served at all, should be individually wrapped rather than served communally or family-style. Drinks should also be served in individual packaging (bottles, cans, etc.) or directly from a tap into a cup or reusable container.** Once someone has finished eating or drinking, unvaccinated people must immediately put their masks back on (see guideline #4).
9. **Training will be provided to volunteers to ensure they are familiar with these guidelines, as well as measures for sanitizing high-touch surfaces.**

MINISTRY-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

EXPLORERS (6th Grade Middle Schoolers)

- Students and teachers will follow all General Guidelines (see above).
- When required by CDC, state, and/or church guidelines, adaptations will be made to allow students and leaders to attend virtually, whether or not others are attending in person.
- When possible, off-site activities will require that parents drop off and pick up students directly at the activity location, to eliminate the risk of traveling (packed into a vehicle) with others who are not part of one's household. Where the rare exception is made due to distance, a permission slip will be required. Masks will be worn by the driver and all passengers for the entire ride and unnecessary stops along the route will be discouraged. Parents can always choose to drive students to and from the event.

FIRST YEAR CONFIRMATION (7th Grade Middle Schoolers, generally)

- Students and leaders will follow all General Guidelines (see above).
- As long as it is safe and feasible to do so, in-person meetings will be held, in a room large enough to maintain physical distancing. Classes can also be held outdoors.
- When required by CDC, state, and/or church guidelines, adaptations will be made to allow students and leaders to attend virtually, whether or not others are attending in person.
- When possible, off-site activities will require that parents drop off and pick up students directly at the activity location, to eliminate the risk of traveling (packed into a vehicle) with others who are not part of one's household. Where the rare exception is made due to distance, a permission slip will be required. Masks will be worn by the driver and all passengers for the entire ride and unnecessary stops along the route will be discouraged. Parents can always choose to drive students to and from the event.

SECOND YEAR CONFIRMATION (8th Grade Middle Schoolers, generally)

- Students and leaders will follow all General Guidelines (see above).
- As long as it is safe and feasible to do so, in-person meetings will be held, in a room large enough to maintain physical distancing. Classes can also be held outdoors.
- When required by CDC, state, and/or church guidelines, adaptations will be made to allow students and leaders to attend virtually, whether or not others are attending in person.
- When possible, off-site activities will require that parents drop off and pick up students directly at the activity location, to eliminate the risk of traveling (packed into a vehicle) with others who are not part of one's household. Where the rare exception is made due to distance, a permission slip will be required. Masks will be worn by the driver and all passengers for the entire ride and unnecessary stops along the route will be discouraged. Parents can always choose to drive students to and from the event.

YOUTH COMMUNITY (9th through 12th Grade High Schoolers)

- Students and leaders will follow all General Guidelines (see above).
- As long as it is safe and feasible to do so, in-person Group Nights and youth activities will be held. Please be watching for texts and emails to learn about upcoming activities and gatherings.
- When possible, off-site activities will require that parents drop off and pick up students directly at the activity location, to eliminate the risk of traveling (packed into a vehicle) with others who are not part of one's household. Where the rare exception is made due to distance, a permission slip will be required. Masks will be worn by the driver and all passengers if anyone in the vehicle is unvaccinated. Unnecessary stops along the route will be discouraged. Parents may choose to drive students to and from the event.
- Activities that generally result in close quarters or require entering someone else's home may be altered this year (ie., most likely held at the church in a larger space).
- Alternatives are being planned for several of our regular Youth Community Mission Trip fundraisers, to steer away from buffet-style food service. Be watching for info about ways your family can help out!
- Any other upcoming off-site activities for youth, including retreats, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine viability and any safety precautions that prove necessary.