

COVID-19 guidelines
The First Parish Church in Taunton
(Approved by the Board of Trustees August 31, 2021)

Recognizing that for The First Parish Church to truly thrive in our community, its doors must be open, if at all possible. The Board has determined that modified in-person activities, including Sunday services and religious education programs, will begin September 1, 2021.

The following guidelines, based on the best information available from public health authorities, will be effective immediately and until further notice.

As it manages the challenges of COVID-19, First Parish is fortunate that it has ample space to provide for recommended social distancing.

We anticipate that these may be modified as guidance from public health authorities evolves.

We will make guidelines as public as possible and keep our community informed through the Weekly Update, our Facebook page, and signage throughout the building.

These guidelines are rooted in our Unitarian-Universalist beliefs in the “inherent worth and dignity of every person” and “the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” We, therefore, implore all attendees and participants in First Parish activities to follow them.

Effective date

Effective September 1, 2021, First Parish Church in Taunton will be resuming all in-person activities, Sunday services, religious education programs, nursery, rentals, and events.

Masks

Masks are required for all adults and young people while indoors.

There is no mask requirement for children in the nursery or playroom during Sunday services.

Social distancing

Event and service attendees should put six feet (about two arm lengths) of distance between themselves and people who don't live in their household.

To assist with social distancing, pews available for seating will be clearly marked.

Vaccinations

We strongly encourage all people who are eligible to be vaccinated as soon as possible to protect their own personal health and the health of others.

All staff and all volunteers who are working with children must be vaccinated and provide proof of vaccination to the church office.

Church Services

Congregational singers working with the Music Director during worship will be masked and sing from the chancel.

The rest of the congregation will not sing but should feel free to move and/or clap hands to the music to engage with the music in other ways. (We are continuing to research this issue.)

Services will still be available online for those who choose not to attend the in-person service.

Nursery and Sunday School

Children 5 years old and above are required to wear masks indoors.

Indoor spaces and routines will be organized to promote a minimum of 3 feet of distance.

Children do not have to wear masks nor maintain distance when outdoors.

Fully vaccinated individuals do not have to wear masks outside; vaccinated staff are encouraged to wear masks when outside if they cannot maintain distance.

Staff and children at increased risk for severe disease due to an underlying condition or with a household member who is at increased risk are encouraged to mask regardless of vaccination status.

Children under 5 years old are exempt from mask requirements, however, a family who prefers to mask their children aged 2 or older while at First Parish will be supported in this choice.

Coffee hour and food

We will hold coffee hour after worship with coffee and tea provided.

People are encouraged to take their beverages outdoors when possible.

We are not allowing any shared/communal food at any church event at this time.

Small group gatherings and rentals

Small groups are welcome to use Zoom for their gatherings if they would like, but the building is open to them. All room bookings should be done through fptevents@gmail.com.

The building use schedule can be seen on our website, <http://www.firstparishtaunton.org/> under the menu item “calendar.” If you book an event at the church and do not see it on the calendar, please email office@firstparishtaunton.org

Conclusion

These measures are offered to significantly reduce risk and provide individuals with confidence that they can make informed judgments when deciding whether to attend First Parish services and events.

We will continue to monitor public health guidance and adjust these guidelines as warranted.

We thank our members, friends, and partners for all that you have done to sustain the mission of First Parish and to care for each other during these very challenging times.

While we continue to confront the stubborn realities of this pandemic, we are grateful for the opportunity to safely gather together in person and online.