

UNITIARIAN SOCIETY OF GERMANTOWN

Guidelines for Outdoor Worship

10/1/2021 update

How we have approached this

Many of us are eager to resume in-person activities at USG as the pandemic waxes and wanes. The Moving Ahead Steering Committee (MASC) was appointed by the Board and the Ministry Executive Team to explore how to move towards multi-platform (in-person and Zoom) worship and activities. Another USG group, the COVID Task Force, is responsible for advising on COVID safety. Multiple members of the COVID Task Force are healthcare professionals, including three physicians and an experienced nurse practitioner.

As much as we want to be together, safety is and must be our first consideration. Everything we do must comply with CDC guidelines and with the recommendations and requirements of the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Additionally, everything must be approved by the COVID Task Force. In some instances, USG protocols are more restrictive than those sources would allow. MASC also has solicited input from the congregation, both via a broad team of leaders (who are charged with advising and networking in their respective areas and reporting back) and at a Town Hall on August 1, 2021. Additional input is welcomed.

As we all know, COVID is a moving target, and the CDC guidelines and government recommendations are subject to change. This happened in August 2021 when the risk level increased. Thereafter, we decided to rent a large open tent through November and start with worship outdoors. The MASC obtained guidance from the COVID Task Force, and with their advice, arrived at the initial requirements for outdoor in-person worship. The COVID Task Force has now reassessed the safety requirements in view of developments in the pandemic. Updated guidelines follow.

Guidelines for Outdoor Worship:

- The congregation will be masked. Masks must cover nose and mouth.
- Speakers who are fully vaccinated may speak from the pulpit unmasked, but will replace their mask when not speaking. Proof of vaccination will be required. Speakers will have amplification. They will keep a distance of at least 8 feet from the congregation.
- Speakers may choose to speak masked regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated. They also must keep a distance of at least 8 feet from the congregation
- Distance of 6 feet between units or pods is required.
- There will be no congregational singing during worship. Humming is permitted.
- Singers will be allowed as part of the presentation of the worship service subject to the following conditions:
 - All singers must be fully vaccinated, with proof of vaccination required
 - Singers may sing unmasked provided they remain 10 feet apart from each other and the congregation or anyone else
 - Singers may sing masked with 6 feet of distance between them and 8 feet between them and the congregation or anyone else.
- Contact information will be obtained by requesting and strongly encouraging attendees to provide their names and contact information on a form to be provided, and to agree to notify USG if they test positive for COVID within the two weeks following the service they attend.
- There will be oral and written announcements, and signs will be posted, advising congregants that masks are required; to keep 6 feet of distance from anyone outside the household; to please provide contact information; and to please stay home if they are unwell or have been exposed to COVID.