

# Follen Church Updated Covid-19 Safety Policy

May 10, 2022

*Our team will revise the policy as needed throughout the year.*

This policy is created by the Safety Team, consisting of President Sophie Evett, Vice President Nick Hart, Co-chair of Lay Ministry Tom Blumenthal, Director of Religious Education Beryl Aschenberg, and Parish Minister Rev. Claire Feingold Thoryn. Our policy-making has been guided by the advice of Follen member and epidemiologist Dr. Matthew Fox, DSc, MPH, information on our ventilation system from Follen's Buildings & Grounds Action Team, research on the policies of other local congregations, and the guidance on indoor performance/worship from the Town of Lexington. This policy applies to all activities at Follen Church.

## Goals

- 1) Follow the science.
- 2) Embrace all members of our community--all belong!
- 3) Align with Massachusetts and Lexington guidelines and metrics.
- 4) Minimize risk while allowing community gatherings for worship, religious education, and fellowship.

## New Information

1. *State* - 5/9/22: [Massachusetts reports 8,625 new COVID cases over 3 days, positivity rate up to 6.77%](#).
2. *County* - [Middlesex County metrics](#) as of May 10, 2022: 370.5 cases per 100K, 1.13% infection rate, 79.8% vaccinated, 44% boosted. Community transmission classification: High.
3. *Town* - May 9, 2022: COVID cases are rising in Middlesex County. The [Lexington Board of Health](#) continues to recommend wearing masks in populated indoor spaces, consistent with CDC recommendations. 118 new cases, positive test rate 6.38%
4. Lexington Public Schools dashboard:  
<https://sites.google.com/lexingtonma.org/lps-covid19-return-to-school/lps-covid-19-reports-dashboard?authuser=0> .
5. *Church* - Several recent reports of parishioners (adult and youth) testing positive for Covid.

## Procedural Expectations

1. Indoor worship continues. Windows will remain open to aid ventilation.
2. Follen masking requirement will be reinstated for worship (see below for unmasking for presenters, singers, etc.)
3. A zoom livestream will be available as an alternative to in-person worship.
4. Religious Education will continue indoors and outdoors with masks required in Littles Classroom.
5. Any food or beverage consumption will be outdoors; food may be served indoors as long as it is easily carried out for consumption.
6. We expect all people 5 and older attending any event in-person to be vaccinated unless they have a medical exception.
7. All staff are required to be vaccinated unless they have a medical exemption.
8. Please continue to respect people's needs and requests for physical distancing. For indoor Religious Education, we will support 3 foot distancing to the greatest extent possible.
9. If you are experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19, including but not limited to: fever, coughing, body or headache, loss of taste/smell, runny nose or stuffed nose, or sore throat, please stay at home. Do not come to Follen Church until all symptoms are gone and/or received negative test.
10. If you test positive for Covid and have attended a Follen Church event, please email [covid@follen.org](mailto:covid@follen.org) as soon as possible so that we can notify others.

[Lexington's Indoor Mask Mandate](#) - lifted

The Town of Lexington has lifted its indoor mask mandate, but we are reinstating it at Follen . All people should mask while indoors with others at Follen Church.

When leading worship, performers and speakers can remove their mask to perform *if* they have either

1. had a negative test within 24 hours and/or
2. there is a HEPA filter placed between each speaker/performer and the audience. (Per communication from Town Manager James Malloy to Lexington Interfaith Clergy Association, August 26, 2021.)

## **Follen's Ventilation System and Sunday Morning Worship**

### *Exemplary Air Exchange in the Sanctuary*

In our sanctuary, [our ventilation system is capable of completely changing the air in the sanctuary every 3-5 minutes](#). This means that in one hour, the air in the room will be completely exchanged for fresh air 12-20 times. This is a magnitude better than the requirements for safe singing according to an [Aerosol Study done by the International Coalition of the Performing Arts](#), which requires a minimum of three air exchanges per hour. In the Community Center, where we may gather for social hour, the ventilation system mixes a steady 25% of fresh air with internal air, leading to 2-4+ air exchanges per hour.

Note: In the sanctuary, when the heating system is running, we have fewer air exchanges but still considerably more than the 2-4 per hour recommendation. .

## **Outdoors**

1. Masks: Masks are encouraged but not required when physically near one another. Unvaccinated people, including unvaccinated children, are encouraged to wear masks.
2. Singing: Physically distanced singing without masks is allowed.
3. Food: Allowed; remain physically distanced.

## **Indoors**

1. Masks are required indoors for all people in a shared space, vaccinated and unvaccinated. (See above for exception for worship speakers and performers.)
2. Hybrid gatherings in person and online are encouraged to include those reducing their Covid exposure risk.
3. For indoor gatherings, physical distancing and reduced capacity of rooms is strongly recommended, please see the table below for space capacity and recommendations. Room set up should encourage physical distancing. Current maximum capacity is set at 75% in the sanctuary.
4. Windows in rooms should be kept opened to allow our ventilation system to bring in fresh air and exhaust used air.
5. Capacity restrictions and distancing should be followed in the sanctuary during worship and in all spaces. If the capacity limit is reached for the sanctuary on Sunday morning, overflow attendees can also listen to the service in another location at Follen (patio if weather allows).
6. Choir Singing: Choir and other singers may unmask as long as the exceptions to the Town's mask mandate are met (recent negative test or HEPA filters present). Renters must follow Lexington's mask mandate and exceptions.
7. Social Hour:
  - a. All snacks and beverages should be consumed outdoors. Outdoor "Coffee Hour" is encouraged.
  - b. Indoor socializing in the Community Center after the service is allowed, although any food or drinks should be consumed outdoors. The fan setting in our Community Center

ventilation allows for a constant 25% fresh air mixed with internal air to circulate throughout. Windows should also be opened.

**Room Capacities - Currently 50% capacity recommended as maximum. Special permission and approved Covid plan required for greater capacity.**

<b>Room</b>	<b>Size sq ft</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>36sqft/ /person</b>	<b>50% capacity</b>	<b>75% Capacity</b>
Sanctuary		225		112	169
Community Center	1900	100-150	53	50-75	75-113
Anne Smith room	405	27	11	14	20
Sonin room	840	96	23	48	72
210 & 213	264	18	7-8	9	14
Chalice Room	204	8	3	3	
Marshman 1st	360	20-40	10	10-20	
Marshman 2nd (2)		9-10		4-5	