



Vale United Methodist Church Healthy Church Policy – **FINAL**

The versions of this document are available at Dropbox/Vale Trustees/Healthy Church, the Church Office, and the contact names listed below

Name	Document Responsibility	Approval Date
The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey J. Haugh	Input and Approval	10 March 2022
Vale Healthy Church Council	Input and Approval	10 March 2022
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Message from The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey J. Haugh

As we stated at the beginning of the pandemic, we at Vale would work to find ways to be together in worship and ministry while keeping everyone safe. This has been a balanced along the way and adjusted as CDC and VDH guidance has evolved.

Consistent with the current CDC guidelines, we are now suspending our current COVID-19 protocols. I encourage us each to continue applying healthy practices we have adopted such as staying home if sick, being aware of your own health needs, and practicing good hand hygiene.

Thank you for the sustained period of patience and support as we have supported one another through these challenging times.

1 References

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”): Community Levels & Criteria, and Prevention Strategies by Level
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>
- The Virginia Department of Health (“VDH”) General, Metric Dashboard, Quarantine and Isolation Calculator and Guidelines, and other Related Links
 - <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/>
- Virginia Department of Health (“VDH”) Levels of Community Transmission Dashboard
 - <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/see-the-numbers/covid-19-in-virginia/community-transmission/>
- The Virginia Department of Health, “General Recommendations, Maintaining a Healthy Facility and Preventing COVID-19: For Businesses and Other Establishments [including houses of worship]”
 - <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/182/2021/05/VDH-General-Recommendations-for-Businesses.pdf>

2 Suspension of Current Healthy Church Policy (Stage 3, Version 4.1, 26 October 2021)

We are suspending previous COVID-19 protocols during times when Fairfax County transmission rates are in the low-risk category as defined by the CDC and as measured by VDH transmission dashboard referenced above.

3 Prevention & Exceptions

- If you are eligible, PLEASE get vaccinated and boosted.
- A portion of the Fellowship Hall, near the Children’s Corner will be a “mask and distancing required zone” during worship services
- Please wear a mask and maintain distancing
 - If you are not up to date on vaccinations or boosters
 - If you are engaging with children
 - Based on personal preference, informed by personal level of risk.
- The Vale Preschool will determine and announce their COVID-19 policies separately.

4 Staying Flexible if Pandemic Fluctuates

- The Healthy Church Team will continue to monitor the environment and adjust protocols as appropriate.
- Any plan changes will be based upon health care expertise including local infection rates, CDC, and Virginia Department of Health guidelines.
- Best practices of Fairfax County of Schools and other local UMCs will continue to serve as informative data points.
- We will flex as appropriate to the course of the pandemic. This may mean temporarily re-instituting previous Healthy Church Policies.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS MAINTAINING A HEALTHY FACILITY AND PREVENTING COVID-19

For Business and Other Establishments

Effective 03/01/2022, the following public health recommendations apply to general business (non-healthcare) settings in Virginia. For more detailed guidance and requirements for specific settings (such as schools, sports, camps, pools, etc), please see the [VDH Website for Schools, Workplaces, and Communities](#) and also [CDC guidance](#).

Encourage vaccination.



Encourage all employees and patrons to get [up to date](#) on their COVID-19 vaccines by going to [Vaccinate.Virginia.gov](#) or calling 1-877-VAX-IN-VA. Where feasible, consider paid time off or other incentives to allow employees to attend vaccination appointments.

Establish policies for mask wearing.



Establish mask wearing policy for employees and patrons that is, at a minimum, at least as protective as [CDC guidelines](#). In areas with [high community levels](#), CDC and VDH recommend everyone aged 2 and older wear a mask in public indoor settings. There are some settings where masks are still required by law, regardless of vaccination status. See [VDH's mask page](#) for the most current information. Use entry-point signage and other means to clearly communicate the mask policy, and have staff available to explain the establishment's mask policy as questions arise. Any individual should always be permitted to wear a mask for public health reasons, if they choose to do so.

The Department of Labor and Industry [COVID-19 Standard](#) still remains in effect. The [DOLI FAQ](#) (revised 2/28/22) helps clarify that non-healthcare employers may follow CDC's updated mask guidance.

Establish policies and practices for physical distance.



Consider implementing physical engineering systems when the COVID-19 community level is at a high level. Also consider other factors, such as whether the business venue largely serves people who are at increased risk for severe disease. Examples of engineering systems could include floor markers or signage for 6 ft distancing, especially in high traffic locations, check out lines, or seating areas.

Promote frequent hand washing.

Promote frequent and thorough hand washing by providing employees and patrons entering into the space with a place to wash their hands. If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide hand sanitizers for customers and staff throughout the place of business, particularly at entry and exit points. Further hand hygiene guidance can be found on the [CDC website](#). A CDC training video is available [here](#).

Practice routine cleaning (and disinfect if needed).

Follow [CDC guidance](#) for cleaning and disinfecting the facility or space. Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets, should be cleaned at least once per day. Consider using an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) when [local transmission levels](#) are substantial or high, when people are not regularly washing hands, or if the space is used by [people at increased risk of severe COVID-19](#). In those situations, disinfecting wipes could be used at least once per day. If patrons wish to wipe down surfaces more often, wipes should be made available to them. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the facility within the last 24 hours, high touch areas should be disinfected, in addition to cleaning the space. Ensure cleaning staff are trained on proper use of cleaning and disinfecting products available in the facility. VDH and CDC do not recommend foggers for disinfection of COVID-19, since there is insufficient evidence to support their use in businesses, their potential benefits do not outweigh potential harms, and conventional cleaning and disinfection methods are safer and proven effective.

Consider screening testing of employees.

Workplace testing programs can help identify employees with COVID-19 infection and can help prevent transmission in the workplace. Refer to [VDH Guidance for Screening Testing in Non-healthcare Workplaces](#) for additional information.

Conduct symptom screening of employees.

Employers should encourage employees to self-monitor for any COVID-19 signs or symptoms before reporting to work. A list of COVID-19 symptoms and a self-checker tool are provided [here](#). This [VDH Algorithm](#) can help employers determine if an employee needs to stay at home or be sent home due to symptoms or exposures. For employers with established occupational health programs, employers can consider measuring temperature and assessing symptoms of employees prior to starting work/before each shift.

Develop or adopt flexible sick leave policies to ensure that sick employees do not report to work if they have symptoms, if they have a positive COVID-19 test, if they need to self-quarantine due to exposure, or if they need to care for a sick family member. Encourage all employees, even if [up to date](#) on vaccines, to get tested if experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

Some employees are at [higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19. Employers should take particular care to reduce their risk of exposure, while making sure to be compliant with relevant Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) regulations. Consider offering vulnerable employees duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees, if agreed to by the employee. Protect employees at [higher risk for severe illness](#) by supporting and encouraging options to telework. Other information on civil rights protections for workers related to COVID-19 is available [here](#).

Incorporate ventilation as a mitigation strategy.

Proper ventilation practices and interventions can reduce the airborne concentrations of COVID-19 inside a building. See [VDH Ventilation Best Practices](#) and [CDC guidance](#) for more information on using ventilation as a strategy to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in buildings.

Note: Although this document provides general guidance to reduce COVID-19 for businesses and organizations, Virginia employers are also subject to requirements provided in the [Virginia Department of Labor and Industry \(DOLI\) Standard](#). See [DOLI's FAQ](#) for additional information on the standard.