

UUCB Opening Task Force (OTF)
Closing Report to UUCB Congregation
May 21, 2023

The Beginning

“UUCB is closed and there is no date for reopening!”

Such was the beginning scene for the Opening Task Force (OTF) in the summer of 2020.

Three years later, we have now returned to somewhat familiar territory in church life. Although we still have COVID, the number of infections, hospitalizations and deaths have been greatly diminished by vaccinations, boosters, masking and medications.

OTF Mission and Actions

Established by the Board of Trustees, OTF was tasked with considering and designing the how and when it would be safe for all UUCB members and friends to once again come together in our spiritual community.

The Task Force met some 72 times over three years via Zoom to consider the guidelines and expert advice of the Unitarian Universalist Association, local public health authorities, the California Department of Public Health, the national Centers for Disease Control, Johns Hopkins Medical Center, and local and national epidemiologists of repute.

Based upon that advice, opening phases for UUCB, health milestones, protocols and church physical plant improvements, e.g., sanctuary ventilation system, were implemented to support us through the worst of the pandemic. Through monthly columns in the Beacon, congregational surveys, snap polls, congregational and board meetings and other communications, the Task Force ensured that the congregation stayed informed of its efforts and had the opportunity to share suggestions and concerns.

Kudos for the Congregation and the Board of Trustees

We want to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the support we received from both the congregation and the Board of Trustees. The congregation’s resilience, commitment to science, engagement with vaccines, boosters, and masks, and acceptance and respect for our COVID protocols and concern for our vulnerable members, have been commendable and invaluable. Together our efforts have helped UUCB reopen and function safely and productively. Over three years, we have had very, very few infections from interactions on our campus.

Kudos for the Tech Team for the Virtual Service/Meeting Option

We want to thank our amazing tech team for their exceptional efforts to establish, maintain and manage our virtual option that enabled us to stay productively connected during the pandemic. We were fortunate that our former co-ministers, the Revs. Kristin and Christian Schmidt, had the technical skill and commitment to create a virtual worship service the very next Sunday, after we closed our campus to in person worship. We were also very fortunate to find our tech-savvy Interim Minister, Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins, who guided us through the transition to our current inclusive hybrid operations.

Admiration for OTF Members

We have so appreciated Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins and Executive Director Tess Snook O'Riva, for their consistent presence, commitment and contribution to the OTF. Similarly, OTF congregation members Lisa Maynard, Sheldon Jones and Patrick Cullinane are very satisfied with our own contributions. We each brought not only congregational sensitivities, but also steadfast participation, wisdom, and organizational skill to the effort.

Next Steps

There is important information to be saved. The OTF will organize and file its relevant information in the appropriate church archives, so our history and processes are there for any future similar need. With ED Tess Snook O'Riva, the Safety Policy Task Force now being formed will begin to revise and update our current safety policies and procedures, to assure both our optimal response to any contagious disease and our preparedness for other hazards, e.g., fire, earthquake, and generally to promote safety and wellness in all our activities.

Closing

COVID is still with us and vulnerabilities remain. Let us remember how important vaccines, boosters, masks and the care we show for each other have been in getting us to today's new normal. We wish you all a safe and healthy future.

OTF (Opening Task Force) Members: Sheldon Jones, Lisa Maynard, Tess Snook O'Riva, ED, Rev. Dr. Michelle Collins, and Patrick Cullinane (Chair), at planning@uucb.org.