

COVID-19 Update 02/25/21

Now that the COVID infection rates are dropping and the vaccines are beginning to roll out, some of you have been asking when we will return to in-person worship. After reviewing the most recent COVID data and public health guidelines, the AMUMC Reentry Team is not recommending a return to in-person worship at this time. Our primary concern remains the commitment to “do no harm,” and the risks of in-person worship continue to outweigh the benefits.

The Reentry Team’s recommendation to stay the course at this time is based on the following:

- Infection Rates
 - The COVID infection rate has been steadily decreasing from its post-holiday peak, however the numbers are still close to those that prompted us to suspend in-person worship in October (and more than 10 times higher than when we initially suspended worship last March!).
 - Additionally, there are virus variants emerging, the impact of which is not yet known.
- Vaccinations
 - While some age groups have already received their vaccines, many more people have not yet had the opportunity to be vaccinated. In Rhode Island the estimated timeline for immunizing those under 65 ranges from the middle of March to the middle of June, depending upon age.
- Guidelines
 - In their most recent recommendations, the New England Conference’s Reentry Team urges “extreme caution” when considering the resumption of in-person worship. They state: “The only ‘safe’ choice is not to hold indoor, in-person, events until the CDC demonstrates that a significant immunization level has been reached.”
 - The RI Department of Health’s most recent guidelines continue to limit in-person worship services and recommend: “When possible, houses of worship are strongly encouraged to provide virtual services as an alternative to in-person services.”
 - The CDC’s most recent publication of “Considerations for Communities of Faith” states: “To decrease your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19, CDC recommends that you do not gather with people who do not live with you at this time.”

The pandemic is a constantly changing situation, so please know that the team will continue to monitor COVID and immunization data, along with any new guidelines from the New England Conference, RI Department of Health, and CDC, and will update recommendations appropriately.

Looking ahead, the Reentry Team recommends the following (subject to change based on future COVID information):

- Easter Sunday
 - In addition to virtual worship online, weather permitting there will be an in-person worship service on the church lawn. The guidelines established for outdoor worship last summer ([click here](#)) will remain in effect.

- Return to Outdoor Worship
 - We will return to weekly outdoor worship on Mother's Day, May 9 at 10 AM. Livestreaming of the service will be available for those who do not attend the service in person.

Please note that if the infection rates continue to decline and the number of people being vaccinated accelerates, the Reentry Team will adjust recommendations accordingly and we may return to in-person worship sooner.

As always, the Reentry Team welcomes your questions or feedback. You can email the team at reentry.amumc@gmail.com or contact any member of the team directly.

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