

March 26, 2021

Dear members and friends of the Franklin United Methodist Church,

On March 13, 2020, in response to growing concerns regarding the spread of a novel-coronavirus, I made the difficult decision to cancel in-person worship. The following Sunday (March 15), the Church Council decided to halt all in-person gatherings. For just over a year now, in response to what became a global pandemic, our gatherings have been exclusively virtual. While virtual small groups and virtual worship have kept us connected through this crisis...

### ***It is finally time!***

*Over the next several weeks we will begin transitioning to in-person small groups and worship. The metrics that will guide whether or not we gather indoors in-person, outdoors in-person, or exclusively virtual can be found on the reverse-side of this letter.*

**Assuming we meet the metrics, in-person small group gatherings (<20 persons) will be allowed to meet at the church beginning on Monday, April 5. Assuming we meet the metrics, in-person worship will begin on Sunday, May 2.** On fair weather days, even if the metrics allow for indoor gatherings, preference will be given to outdoor gatherings. It is important to note that *all in-person worship services and most in-person small groups will continue to allow for virtual participation.* Links to participate virtually will be sent through the church website and calendar. This will allow people who may be traveling, homebound, in an institution, or living at a distance to participate in the life of the church even though they cannot make it to the facility in-person.

As we make the transition back to in-person gatherings, most COVID protocols will remain in place. You must wear a mask over your nose and mouth, maintain physical distancing, frequently sanitize your hands, and fill out a health questionnaire (for contact tracing purposes) in order to participate in-person. There will be no group singing. And, capacity limits will be set for indoor events in order to maintain physical distancing. A registration and RSVP system will be setup so that we can plan for your in-person worship participation. Virtual worship participants will not have to register for worship. We will not, at this time, be instituting a registration process for small group gatherings.

The reverse-side of this letter includes the metrics that will guide how we gather, along with some reminders about our COVID protocols. Details about a few upcoming in-person events are enclosed with this letter. If you have any questions about the transition to in-person gatherings or you just want to chat, please feel free to contact me directly. I look forward to gathering with you in-person once again that we might God, work and live life together for Christ's sake!

Peace.  
Pastor Jacob

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# Metrics for Safer Gatherings

at Franklin United Methodist Church

Adopted by the Church Council on March 21, 2021.

## IN-PERSON INSIDE

Limited indoor gatherings with persons outside one's household *may* be relatively safe if **all three** of these conditions can be met for *at least two consecutive weeks*:

- Fewer than 5% of the people in the Town of Franklin who are tested test positive as reported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- The rate of new cases per day in Franklin is less than 10 in 100,000 (<42 total positive tests in last 14 days).
- ICU beds are filled to less than 70% of capacity in the Metrowest region as reported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

If any one of these conditions are not met, indoor church gatherings may not occur.

## IN-PERSON OUTSIDE

Limited outdoor gatherings with persons outside one's own household *may* be relatively safe if **all three** of these conditions can be met for at least two consecutive weeks:

- Fewer than 10% of the people in the Town of Franklin who are tested test positive as reported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
- The rate of new cases per day in the Town of Franklin is less than 20 in 100,000 (<84 total positive tests in last 14 days).
- ICU beds are filled to less than 80% of capacity in the Metrowest region as reported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

If any one of these conditions are not met, neither indoor nor outdoor church gatherings may occur

## VIRTUAL ONLY

If one or more of the conditions for in-person outside gatherings are not met, church gatherings will be virtual only.

*These metrics follow the guidance offered by The Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship, and Sacraments—a consultation group sponsored by Candler School of Theology, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, The Liturgical Conference, Styberg Preaching Institute, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*

*Public health data for the Town of Franklin can be found at <https://www.franklinma.gov/home/pages/vaccination-and-covid-19-data>. This information is updated every Thursday.*

*ICU bed capacity for the Metrowest region can be found on the State of Massachusetts COVID Dashboard: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting#%2Fcovid-19-interactive-data-dashboard>.*

**Metrics posted on Thursday will impact gatherings Friday through the following Thursday..**

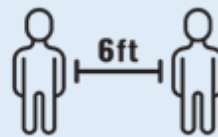
## ALL IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS MUST:



Wear a mask over the mouth and nose for the entirety of the gathering. All persons over the age of 2 are asked to wear a mask.



Complete a health questionnaire. If you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, you may not attend in-person gatherings at our facility.



Maintain 6 ft between household groups. Avoid close contact with others outside your household.



Wash hands regularly. Hand sanitizer is provided at each main egress and throughout the building.