



The First Congregational Church of Wallingford

October 21, 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

We are writing to keep you informed about news relative to our church and specifically about services of worship and “in person” gatherings.

At its June meeting, Church Council established a **COVID – 19 Task Force** whose responsibilities were to research and review guidelines and protocols for “in person” gatherings in houses of worship. Based on information from sources such as the CDC, state and local authorities and health departments, and the UCC Insurance Board, the task force was also charged with creating a plan detailing necessary steps and requirements for resuming “in person” worship and other gatherings in our church facility.

The Task Force Members include: The Reverend Kathy Cunliffe, (Sr. Minister), Jessie DePonte (Christian Education), Tim Keogh (Trustees), Sherry Perkowski (former Church Sexton), Debby Voelker (Diaconate), and Kathy Wallace (Music Committee).

The Task Force, which began meeting in July, reviewed all pertinent guidelines, created a summary of at least thirty tasks that would need to be completed, and drew up a comprehensive plan related to “re-gathering” for worship. We determined opening criteria, established procedures, policies and protocols for socially distanced in-person worship, purchased supplies for sanitation and disinfectant needs, and solicited quotes for deep cleaning of the sanctuary from professional cleaning companies. We also removed all soft surface pew cushions from the first floor of the sanctuary, as well as all hymnals and other materials in the pews per recommended guidelines. We are continuing to monitor local and state Covid-19 recommendations, as well as case numbers, hospitalizations, positivity rates, etc.

In order to consider the possibility of re-gathering in person for worship, we have established criteria that must be met to ensure the safety of all and our best possible practices. Our current criteria include: 1.) The state must be in Phase Three. 2.) While in Phase Three, we must meet the criteria of 50% total capacity or no more than 200 people maximum. 3.) The CT daily positivity rate must be at or near 1%.

In addition to these criteria, we must establish a process for worshippers to pre-register: making a reservation to attend and providing necessary information if the need for contact tracing arises. We will allow for walk-ins who will register as they arrive, as long as we continue to maintain less than the maximum total allowed.

There will be a set of requirements for attendees that will be shared with the congregation before re-gathering. There will also be protocols for what can and cannot occur as part of our worship experience.

To ensure that we are in compliance with all procedures and protocols, we will need **TEAMS OF VOLUNTEERS** (10 each Sunday morning) to assist with worship services. The necessary training will be provided for all volunteers. Willing volunteers should contact Debby Voelker by email at dvbrae@gmail.com or contact the church office at 203-265-1691 and leave a message along with your contact info. We will need a minimum of thirty volunteers to commit to serving on a rotating basis.

PLEASE NOTE: People with any pre-existing conditions, and those who are in high risk populations due to age or profession, are strongly encouraged to avoid attending worship or volunteering at this time. However, individuals will be granted their own discretion and responsibility for these decisions.

We have been completing this work with the hope of re-gathering once all tasks are completed and all protocols and procedures are in place.

Our highest priorities at this time are completing the recruiting and training of volunteers, completing the ordering of supplies, professionally sanitizing the sanctuary just prior to our first gathering, completing the creation and placement of signage, and establishing our system for reservations.

We are also aware that the numbers on the state and national level are currently rising and will need to be monitored. If a possible regathering date is chosen, it may be necessary to cancel or change that date with short notice as conditions warrant. We will keep the congregation informed as this effort continues.

Now is the time that it is crucial for us to know if we have your correct contact information, especially an up-to-date email address. If you or someone you know does not use technology or has not been receiving information from the church via Constant Contact or in the mail, please let us know.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you are interested in assisting us in any of the above described tasks and preparations, please feel free to contact any Task Force Member.

Grace and Peace,

The COVID – 19 Task Force