

MEETING HOUSE REOPENING UPDATE

Friends:

As the leaves turn to their rich and deep color we look forward to the coming of cooler crisp air and the smells of pumpkin spice cake, hot chocolate brewing in a pot on the stove, and meeting with close friends in our homes, schools, and community events. This time of the year we are used to returning to the friendly pews in our church. There are a lot of other activities we are used to doing such as the Topsfield fair, young families getting together for food and fellowship, and youth and children beginning their year's activities. Unfortunately this year because of Covid 19 there is no fair. You can probably hear the sighs of relief from the local turkey population. I guess they are the only ones who are happy with the news of the cancellation of this annual event.

The last six months at our church has led us to follow the advice of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ to close our Meeting house and the Emerson Center and follow the guidelines of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and their restrictions on houses of worship. With this in mind, the Board of Deacons with the approval of the Council and the staff have been putting together a protocol of how we will worship when the Meeting House reopens for worship on **Sunday October 4 2020**. We met several times this summer on Zoom and had a number of e-mails to discuss what worship would look like in this time of Covid 19. We also ran two surveys in which we received wonderful support from the congregation about your thoughts on reopening live worship. Thank you again for your help. The staff has worked patiently with us as we walked together in a time of uncertainty and many changes.

The results of the Deacons work will appear in an announcement about our protocol for worship. This week I would like to offer a preview of what we are asking you to do if you plan to come to worship in person starting **October 4, 2020**.

- People who wish to attend must register by the Friday prior to the service to reserve a seat. A link to the sign up will be forthcoming.
- Maximum capacity in the Meeting house is 25 people (19 members, six laity and clergy conducting the service).
- We will continue to have coverage of the service with Zoom and Community TV.
- There will be specific instruction on how to enter and exit the sanctuary.
- There will be marked places where to sit.
- Masks will need to be worn throughout the service.
- All the doors will be open along with fans running to keep the air moving in the sanctuary.
- There is a sign in sheet for everyone to sign upon arrival at the meeting house.
- There will cleaning before and after each service.

We will have a church chat on Zoom at the conclusion of the Zoom service on **Sunday September 27, 2020**. This will be a time for further discussion on what our live services will look like and answer your questions.

Your Deacons realize and understand this is going to be a big change for everyone in the congregation and the staff. However, this church has undergone many changes in its history in this community. There have been famines, pandemics, wars, financial crisis, and any number of other changing events in the last 350th plus years. We are still here because of the will and love of those who have come before us to worship God in a place of peace from the daily activities of their busy lives.

The Board of Deacons are confident with the love and grace each of us possess, we will come through this latest health crisis with a new sense of hope for the future.

Larry Atkins, chair of the Board of Deacons and members; Mike Ierardi, Duane Melling, Gerrie Bunker, Debbie Baker, Mary Alice Spain, Ellie Losee, John Szymanski, Steve Bunker.