

## Pilgrim Church Building Use Update

### Summary

We are grateful to see the vaccination process underway and to foresee some return to normalcy. However, given vaccination rates and ongoing CoVid19 infections in our area, we predict we will not return to in-sanctuary large group worship, nor will we have additional in-building gatherings, before summer. However, we will work to offer outdoor worship and fellowship gatherings as weather and case counts permit, and we hope to be back in the sanctuary this fall. Please contact us with any questions or feedback.

### Details

Some members of the Building Use team met on February 23. We gathered input from the staff and read materials from the Southern New England Conference of the UCC as well as the Wisconsin Council of Churches. See list of resources at the end of this document.

### In-Building Worship

To be ready to return to large group in-building gatherings such as worship in the sanctuary, we will look for the following milestones:

A high percentage of our local county has been vaccinated – well above 50% and preferably nearing 70%.

Our staff worship leaders have been vaccinated long enough to have optimal immunity (approximately 2 weeks after 2nd shot)

Community spread as measured by “daily cases per 100K” is consistently medium or low (<5/100k). (On February 24, there were approximately 16 cases per 100k in Middlesex County, per CoVidActNow.org.)

The Commonwealth and Lexington guidance supports this.

Additionally, we hope that safely singing together corresponds to the time when we return to the sanctuary for worship.

Until that time, Sunday morning worship will remain remote. We hope that we can return to in-person in-sanctuary large group worship in September.

### Other In-Person Worship Opportunities

We will be offering outdoor worship opportunities and fellowship gatherings separate from Sunday morning worship, weather and case counts permitting. For example, we plan to gather outside for a Palm Sunday worship on March 28 at 2pm in addition to our morning Palm Sunday service which will be online. We have hikes planned for our kids and youth. We are considering what outdoor worship could look like over the summer as well. We are also making appointments for individual prayer and meditation in the Sanctuary this spring.

### Hybrid Worship

We are also committed to continuing to offer online access to worship even once we are back in the sanctuary. This model is called Hybrid Worship.

### Other Building Use

We are grateful that our current building users (the nursery school and a small chamber music group) have rigorously followed safety protocols. We do not currently foresee adding additional building users before Fall.

### Ongoing Preparation

We are consulting with our conference to understand our AV needs for Hybrid Worship. We are also researching how we might offer Hybrid Worship with outdoor worship gatherings. We are researching whether we could use the lawn for outdoor worship during the summer, including how to provide shade. We are also researching updated ventilation and air quality recommendations for building use.

### Continued patience

We appreciate the patience of the congregation as we work to balance safety - both our own and our neighbors' - with a yearning for normalcy. We are all anxious to return to as in-person indoor gatherings and expect this to transition toward this over the next several months. Meanwhile,

even as we prepare for this return, we are mindful about our resources. We don't want to gather indoors before it's safe, and we don't want to spend too much on equipment that will only serve us in the short term. We welcome your feedback.

## Resources

Tracking Infection Rates and Risk in Middlesex County:

[https://covidactnow.org/us/massachusetts-ma/county/middlesex\\_county/?s=1620561](https://covidactnow.org/us/massachusetts-ma/county/middlesex_county/?s=1620561)

Recommendations for Churches:

<https://www.sneucc.org/should-we-resume-in-person-worship> (As of late February, recommends that churches remain remote through at least May.)

<https://www.wichurches.org/2021/01/14/returning-to-church/> (Our group used the logic outlined in this document to develop our recommendation.)

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/phase-iii-step-1-places-of-worship-protocol-summary/download>

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