



UPDATES ABOUT IN-PERSON WORSHIP AT FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

Dear Members and Friends,

It is with sadness and also with gratitude for the wisdom and courage of your Consistory that I share with you last night's decision that effective Sunday December 13, the 10AM service will be virtual only as will Jazz Vespers.

As of Monday, December 7, 2020, Schenectady County's 7-day average positivity rate was 6.9%. The COVID Safety Policy adopted by the Consistory in November states: *If 7-day average positivity rates in the Capital Region or Schenectady rise above 5% for 5 straight days (<https://forward.ny.gov/percentage-positive-results-region-dashboard>) or if the ministers and senior elders deem it necessary, worship will shift to virtual only.*

I know how disappointing this is for you. It's Advent! Christmas is coming! Small ensembles of choir members have just begun to share their music! We all want to be together for celebration and support in worship, especially in times when it feels like so much of life has been taken away.

We will be together – just not as we envisioned. Sunday morning worship with a core crew of five people (pastors, musician and tech) will still be livestreamed on YouTube. Christmas Eve, we will have the virtual 5pm intergenerational and 11pm jazz vespers services and will now add a beautiful and meaningful mid-evening service to the online opportunities. There will still be luminaria in the church yard.

We will continue to hold meetings and educational offerings online. The Wednesday Lunch program will be grab-and-go outdoors in the courtyard. Pathways and youth programming will be planned following safety guidelines.

Once 7-day average positivity rates decline below 5%, in-person worship may begin again in accordance with NY State and Schenectady County Health Department Covid mandates. In the days ahead, your staff will continue to keep us safely connected to one another and to God. Volunteers will continue to step forward. The valuable ministry of this congregation – not just past but present and future – will go on with your support. Infection rates will fall in time and vaccines will become available. We will discover what God is calling us to become and resume our worship and witness together in person.

Thank you for your understanding, your prayers of hope, and your grace in adapting. God is with us, coming among us, transforming our lives for good.

Lynn Carman Bodden

Email sent to members 12/9/2020

