

Dear Church Family,

This is the letter we've been longing to write for a long time. One year, two months and eight days, to be exact!

On Monday morning, Governor Charlie Baker announced that on May 29<sup>th</sup>, most state guidelines and restrictions that were put in place to stop the spread of Covid-19 will be lifted, and on June 15<sup>th</sup> the state of emergency will end.

According to the state's web site, "Effective May 29, all industries will be permitted to open. With the exception of remaining face-covering requirements for public and private transportation systems and facilities housing vulnerable populations, all industry restrictions will be lifted, and capacity will increase to 100% for all industries. The gathering limit will be rescinded."

The state added that, "in line with updated CDC face covering guidance, the Administration will rescind the current face covering order and issue a new face covering advisory effective May 29."

The Governor stressed that "Non-vaccinated individuals are advised to continue wearing face masks and to continue distancing in most settings. The advisory will also recommend fully vaccinated individuals no longer need to wear a face covering or social distance indoors or outdoors except for in certain situations."

The Governor said that several factors led to this decision:

- MA is on track to meet the goal of fully vaccinating 4.1 million residents by the first week of June.
- Over 75% of adults have received at least one dose.
- New cases have dropped by 89% since January 8, while hospitalizations for Covid and the positive test rate are both down 88% since January 1.
- There are currently 975 locations for MA residents to access vaccines without delay.

For complete coverage of MA's reopening plan, click [HERE](#).

### ***What does this mean for College Church?***

On Monday evening, we, the Regathering Task Force, met for the last time.

We decided that, **beginning Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup>**, masks and social distancing will no longer be required at outdoor services at College Church. All indoor and outdoor church activities, both on and off campus, can resume at full capacity, without restrictions, and the church office will officially re-open.

We strongly encourage all participants to follow the [CDC's guidelines for vaccinated and unvaccinated people](#).

The Regathering Task Force has now officially disbanded.

### ***Why are we making these changes all at once?***

From the very beginning, we have taken our cues from the CDC, health care experts and local, state and national authorities. We are continuing to do so now as we move toward full regathering.

### ***When will we resume indoor services?***

The Facilities team is working hard to complete the restoration and repairs to the basement in the wake of this winter's flood.

Members of our Tech Team are working hard to adapt the sanctuary and install new equipment to support livestreaming once we return indoors.

When these two projects have been completed, we will resume indoor services. The target date for their completion is July 31<sup>st</sup>. We hope that people will take advantage of this window of time to get vaccinated before indoor services resume.

### ***Will services continue to be livestreamed?***

Yes! We will continue to livestream our outdoor services, and we will continue to livestream after we move back indoors.

### ***What can we expect going forward?***

Mostly, you can expect that church life will return to normal (except that we will continue to worship outdoors until the renovations are complete).

On Sunday mornings, beginning, May 30<sup>th</sup>, worshippers will be free to arrive, unmasked, sit wherever they want and socialize before and after the service without social distancing.

Small groups and other ministries can resume meeting indoors or outdoors, sharing meals and interacting just as they did before the pandemic.

This spring and summer we can look forward to in-person picnics, baptisms and special events, celebrating communion together, camping, the Summer Theatre Intensive and more!

Our former Pastor, Dave McDowell, and his wife, Gloria, are also looking forward to visiting Western MA and worshipping with us on July 4 and 11!

### ***Well Done!***

The whole task force wants to thank you all so very much for being so patient, cooperative and adaptable, and for helping to keep one another safe over the past 14 months.

We are so very grateful for the many people whose leadership, labor and expertise helped to bring this day about.

### ***A Call to Patience and Grace***

We realize that not everyone will be ready to set aside their mask and re-enter a world without social distancing on May 29th, and so we urge all of us to be patient and considerate of those who may be on a different timetable for re-entry.

As we interact with one another, let's be deferential and "read the signs": respect people's desires for physical distancing, ask permission before you offer a handshake or a hug, be sensitive and respectful toward one another's social cues and choices. With some patience, sensitivity and care, we can make this spring and summer a joyful time for everyone.

Of course, we continue to ask that anyone showing signs of illness remain at home.

Please be patient while we complete the renovations and modifications to our indoor spaces. These are important investments that will serve us for years to come!

And, finally, take time to thank our staff and ministry leaders for their faithfulness and creativity in the midst of a long and disruptive season.

We look forward to this next season and renewed opportunities to worship, fellowship and serve together!

With Gratitude and Hope,

*The Regathering Task Force*