

# The Life of the Church

by

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Mark Davis, COVID Response Team

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Dear Church Family,

We pray that this letter finds you well and relatively unaffected by the on-going COVID-19 upsurge. As most of you are aware, we made a decision to suspend in-person services through January 16, 2022. The pastor made this decision, in consultation with our COVID Response Team (CRT), out of an abundance of caution in response to the extremely high rate of community infection and the extreme difficulty in getting any form of COVID test. Even fully vaccinated people are susceptible and can be infectious despite being asymptomatic or only slightly ill with cold and flu-like symptoms.

Given this, we felt it important to re-evaluate our protocols in light of new data and understanding of this new COVID strain and recent changes in CDC guidance and protocols. As part of this evaluation, the CRT has conducted risk sensitivity analyses, using a modeling tool developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This tool calculates the duration of time that a given number of people can safely occupy a room as a function of room dimensions, number of people, activity (e.g., resting, speaking, singing), air ventilation/filtering/purification, and type of mask.

The CRT has been meeting weekly to assess the implications of these on-going evaluations. This week, we decided that it was best to continue virtual online services through the end of January, allowing more time for:

- COVID tests to become readily accessible
- ensuring awareness and understanding of protocols by members and staff

When we return to in-person services, we anticipate relatively minor changes to our protocols in response to the Omicron variant.

We will be providing an update next week, including awareness and educational materials. In the meantime, we wanted to give you ample notice that **we will not resume in-person services until at least February 6<sup>th</sup>.**

If you have any questions, concerns or need for support during this time, please contact us or Pastor Michael. Please continue to enjoy our pre-recorded worship services online at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN-kkokTCbVE9urwgP\\_AEcw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN-kkokTCbVE9urwgP_AEcw), which is also accessible from our website home page at <https://woodburyumc.net/>.

God bless you all.

*Meg and Mark*