

We look forward to a time when we can all worship in-person once again. We all miss those special moments when we gather in-person.

Knowing this, and having a desire to be open about the decision-making process, we are providing a brief update of our status relative to in-person worship:

Outdoor worship is weather dependent. When the temperatures are consistently on the rise, and over 50 degrees, we will begin to plan for outdoor worship once again.

Indoor worship is on hold. When the 7-day average positivity rate is below 5% and falling for a period of 14 days in Anne Arundel County as reported by the Maryland Dept. of Health, we will begin to plan for indoor worship once again.

These decisions are based on the best information, guidance, and direction we have available, and are continually evaluated for our situation (See below for additional detail). Please be in prayer with us, as we continue to pray for discernment and have discussions relative to in-person worship.

We are blessed with the resources to worship online and maintain our relationships with each other, and our Lord. We humbly ask that everyone prayerfully consider how we will continue to live into our vision of Welcoming All, Growing Together and Making a Difference during these challenging times.

We welcome your questions, suggestions, ideas, and concerns as we work through this together. May we all join in prayer, seeking God's wisdom (James 1:5), as we move forward to fulfill our God-given mission of making disciples who make disciples (Matt. 28:19, 20).

### **Additional Detail**

In our **decision-making process**, we continue to closely monitor the coronavirus prevalence in our community and seek the key factors that will allow us to make the best decision to safely resume indoor services. Our decisions are based on the best information, guidance, and direction we have received from nationally recognized medical professionals, medical doctors, epidemiological experts and the direction of national, state and local government officials. We considered the following, along with input from other sources, as we have strived to do no harm while caring for all:

Anne Arundel County Government officials provide specific guidelines for religious organizations allowing indoor meetings at 50% capacity when physical separation can be maintained (50 individuals is our sanctuaries maximum capacity based on current guidelines).

#### U.S. Surgeon General and Epidemiologists' COVID-19 guidance and direction:

We have implemented health and safety procedures, processes and protocols aligned with their guidance and direction – physical distancing / separation, required mask wearing, pre-screening individuals before entering - temperature screening, / associated questions, individual / personnel restricted paths (entrance, exit, restroom /facilities flow) hand sanitizers / washing, facility capacity compliance, air circulation , cleaning protocols, and many more that you have probably experienced.

#### Anne Arundel County Department of Health:

Key COVID-19 Indicators and statistics show that the 7-day testing positivity rate for Anne Arundel County is currently 6.94%. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) provides guidance that a 5% positivity rate is a decision threshold. We believe that a sustained positivity rate of less than 5% is key to returning to indoor

worship. The good news is that this indicator has been decreasing since the holiday peak of over 11%. This information can be found at: <https://aahealth.org/reopening-dashboard-status-report/>

#### COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool:

The risk level is the estimated chance (0-100%) that at least 1 COVID-19 positive individual will be present at an event in a county, given the size of the group. Based on a group size of 50 people meeting inside our sanctuary today (Anne Arundel County) there is a 40% probability that at least one person has COVID-19. This factor highlights the risk of reopening at this time. This information can be found at: <https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/>

#### Moving Forward:

We are at the beginning of a widespread vaccinations which should improve our safety and defense against the virus. However, we are now faced with an influx of COVID-19 mutations that are being tested for resistance to the vaccines. There are still many uncertainties and unknowns with the virus mutations. Vigilance in wearing CDC approved masks; maintaining physical separation (6 feet minimum) and washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and hot water remain key to defeating this pandemic.

We have prayerfully considered these, and other sources based in fact, and based on the totality of information available at this time we believe that gathering for indoor worship is premature. We all want to be physically together again, but we must consider the well-being of our entire faith community.