



## Roxbury Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

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*We Are a Community Seeking to Share God's Love!*

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September 10, 2020



Dear Congregation Members and Friends,

This has indeed been a challenging few months here and around the country. It is still a time unlike anything we have experienced in any of our lifetimes. We have as a community and as individuals, tried to keep ourselves and others safe in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Church and its staff have worked hard to have the church remain as active and safe as possible. We have gone to having worship and meetings go online using Zoom and Facebook Live. We have sought to have communication from the church on a regular basis and posted a lot of information both informational and pastoral. Our Deacons have reached out by phone and letter to many of you and I have sought to reach out to those most vulnerable. The church has not closed, in fact it has been open, creative in its outreach, and been challenged to seek what the church can be both now and in the future.

So where are we now? We are in what is known as "Phase Three" of the pandemic. The numbers of tested positives and hospitalizations are down and we are adhering to what the health professionals are telling us as far as protective measures. Our Newtown Health District has been advising us all along and here is the current guidance:

*"Effective immediately (May 20, 2020), the 49-person limit on religious, spiritual and worship gatherings is raised for indoor gatherings to 25% of capacity of the indoor space or a maximum of 100 people, whichever is smaller, and to 150 people for outdoor gatherings, provided in each case that appropriate safety and social distancing measures shall be employed."*

### Health Guidance for now and the foreseeable future:

In person worship in sanctuaries is one of the types of gatherings that is most likely to spread the infection. So...

- If you feeling ill or have a temperature above 100.4 within 72 hours, to not attend worship.
- You are asked to bring your own chair (September 6 only)
- You must wear a mask
- Each person upon arriving must sanitize their hands.
- You (individuals or household groups) must sit socially distanced from each other (min. 6 feet)

*"No Matter Who You Are, Or Where You Are on Life's Journey, You Are Welcome Here!"*

- We ask that you not shake hands, hug or be closer than 6 feet from those who are not from your household.

- The church will not be open for restrooms. In the case of an emergency bathroom need, please use the Handicap/ Gender Neutral bathroom. We ask that you sanitize the restroom including all surfaces touched and used with the spray disinfectant located in the bathroom.

- We will not be singing hymns nor having responsive readings and there will be no social hour following. Hymns will be printed in the bulletin and we encourage you to read along and consider the meaning of the lyrics. Hymnals and Bibles have been removed because of potential cross contamination.

- We ask after worship to nod a greeting or wave to one another as you move to your vehicle to leave.

- There will not be a Fellowship / Coffee Hour for the foreseeable future.

- First thing when you get home – wash your hands!

PLEASE do not put the church leadership in the position of having to enforce these!

Lastly, if the health situation worsens or if we note folks disregarding these items, we will go back to virtual worship only.

We know and acknowledge that for some, they will not come back to worship in the Meetinghouse until a vaccine is available and received. For us that also means that for the future an essential part of this church's ministry will be that all services will also be Virtual on our Zoom Channel and Facebook Live. Virtual Ministry will not be a side thing, but just as important as in-person participation. We have included people who beforehand, were not participating in worship or had previously.

#### In-Person – In the Meetinghouse

Sunday, September 13: We will have our worship in the Meetinghouse. Things will be different. In addition to the health guidance above, there are pews marked off and not to be used to create social distance during worship. Members of the same household may sit together but we ask that if you do not live within that household, you sit in another location. The Choir loft on the main level is available as well.

We ask as you enter and leave the building, be conscious of traffic flow, if need be finding another exit (such as out thru Fellowship Hall) so as to not come in close proximity to others. We are following the guidance provided by our Newtown Health District and the State as we seek to keep everyone safe. After worship has concluded and everyone has left the building, a few volunteers will spray disinfect the spaces used. (Volunteers needed)

#### What Can You Do?

I would like to share some things, written by my colleague, Jonathan Chapman:

Four Things About Being the Church Once We're Back:

1. Participate as fully as you can
2. Smile & Wave, but don't touch
3. Respect boundaries other place what you can do, as we make this transition.
4. Continue your financial support. It is need now more than ever.

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ALSO

1. Call Folks You Notice Aren't Around – It's easy in times like this for individuals to feel isolated – either by doctor's orders or through self-imposed isolation. If you notice someone is isn't around, please check in on them. We're in this together.
2. Stay active in our online community – just because you may decide not to be with us on Sunday morning, doesn't mean you don't have ways to stay connected. Sign up for our eFaith Matters to stay up to date with all the happenings here at Roxbury Church (email to david@roxburychurch.org)
3. Support each other and pray. Seriously. – We believe in science and prayer. Prayer calls out to God AND draws our own attention to the things that matter in our lives. Pray for those who are sick. Pray for those on the front lines still. Pray for the researchers figuring this out. Pray.

The Church is open and it has never really closed. But to be effective and faithful to our call, let us practice physical distancing, wash our hands, use our sanitizer and continue to be the Body of Christ. We are called to be beacons of light and hope in the midst of the challenges of our time. Essentially, we proclaim God's love for all.

In Christ's Spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David F. Peters". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Rev. David F. Peters  
Minister