



St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Where all are welcome at the Lord's table

Dear Friends,

I write to share with you the unfortunate news that effective immediately we will be suspending our in-person worship. Although the offices will remain open and our building will remain available for the 12-step groups that have been using our dining room and upper auditorium, worship, until otherwise indicated, will be virtual only. While this move hardly comes as a surprise, it still comes with great disappointment.

Like in times past, I make the decision based upon the current state-wide trends in infection, the input of our bishop, and the wise counsel of parishioners and staff.

I imagine most of you have heard, the test-positive rate in RI continues to climb. Wednesday, 6.7% of Rhode Islanders who recently received tests tested positive and yesterday that figure was 5.2%. These numbers are a dramatic rise from the rates when we initially re-opened in August. Likewise, the weekly test positive rate has increased from 2.7% to 3.3% to 3.9% over the past three weeks. I expect when the next 7-day figure comes out it will be considerably higher still.

In addition to these numbers, our bishop wrote Thursday saying, "I join with the other Episcopal Bishops of New England in urging you to return to virtual worship." This represents his strongest and clearest direction to date, and I am inclined to honor our bishop's urgings.

Finally, I have spoken with Rodney, Tanya, Gary, and Margaret Clifton. They too were in agreement with the decision to suspend in-person worship.

The good news and the bad news is one and the same—we have been here before. We all, I imagine, are heart-sick that COVID still plagues us and in fact, seems to be regaining a renewed strangle-hold on our activities. Yet, we also know that no matter what the COVID-related restrictions, our worship will continue, our prayers will continue, even our songs will continue. We, as a faith community, will continue to care for one another, accompany one another, and help one another endure.

Because of you, with all of you, I have seen God's grace ever-present throughout these past several months. I have no doubt the same will be true in the months to come. If you have any questions or needs, please do not hesitate to contact me at trich@stlukeseg.org.

Peace,

Jim