



March 30, 2021  
Letter to the Congregation

Dear Members and Friends of Grace Congregational Church UCC,

As Chair of the Diaconate, I thank you for your patience and willingness to share worship in new and creative ways over the last year. This has been a tough time for all of us with the restrictions this virus has placed on us. It has been an even worse time for those among us who have been isolated and lonely, or those who have lost family members as a result of this pandemic. However, with the availability of lifesaving vaccines, there is now hope on the horizon for us.

The Diaconate met last week and I am happy to share some great news with you. Starting on Easter morning, we will be able to see each other in person at either of two worship times. You can either join us at sunrise at Neshotah Beach at 6:10 AM or you can participate with us in the church parking lot at 9:00 AM for our regular Easter service. Of course, we will be live streaming and recording the 9:00 AM service if you prefer to join us from home.

Going forward, we will continue meeting outdoors as we did last summer at 9:00 AM every week for worship. The services will be largely the same as last summer, but now we will be able to do some congregational singing along with our song leaders as long as we remain masked and socially distanced. These outdoor services will also be live-streamed and recorded so you can participate at home either at 9:00 AM or later at a time of your choosing.

Since our worship leaders have now been able to be vaccinated, beginning the week after Mother's Day (on May 16th) we plan to begin a second worship service in-person and indoors at 11 AM. Initially, this will be limited to only 50 participants including the worship leaders and will be a somewhat shorter service - without singing. There will be some additional restrictions we will need to follow for the indoor services, but we will communicate those details as we move through April.

We ask for your patience as we make this transition. Undoubtedly, we will be making modifications as we go along based on safety guidelines and our own experience. However, with everyone working together, we will be back to the robust and very personal worship experience we all crave as soon as possible.

Please remember that the pressures of the last year have also taken a toll on our worship leaders. They have been under a great deal of stress as a result of trying to counsel and support us through this very trying time. Through it all, they have handled themselves with grace and humility.

As we move forward, we only ask that you all be kind, don't judge one another, and let's be the church!

Don Lewellen, chairperson of the Board of the Diaconate