

### **Covid Task Force March Update**

We are relieved that Rock Island County is beginning to show some improvement in our Covid Positivity Rate and Hospitalization Rate. It is also VERY good news that so many members and friends of Hope UCC and individuals throughout Rock Island County are scheduled or have already received both doses of the vaccination. The return to in-person learning in our schools, relaxing the safety mitigations, and vaccinations being administered in our area are all encouraging signs that better days are coming. Out of an abundance of caution and with our call to faithfully care for our community, Hope UCC's Church Council has decided to continue with our policy of only virtual gatherings for worship, meetings, and programs through the end of March. This decision was made based on the very small percentage of vaccinations administered in Rock Island County at this time as well as the risk from new and more easily transmitted variations of this virus. We are hopeful to be able to safely regather in person after March, but please remember that all services, meetings, programs, and other events are available using technology which is the safest way for our congregation to gather. We will continue our policy welcoming in person anyone without the ability to join electronically as they feel safe doing so.

The question has been asked about a possible return to in person worship for Easter Sunday – with proper safety measures in place. Hope UCC's Church Council will discuss this at their February meeting and we will let everyone know when a decision and plan to regather is in place. State restrictions place a 50 person limit on in person gatherings, and if we regather, this will be our maximum occupancy as well. Please be assured that all services will continue to be livestreamed whether we have returned to in person worship or not. Please watch for notifications about changes in policy!

We continue to adhere to our safe building policy. Anyone in our building and sanctuary must be correctly masked and maintain social distance guidelines. We thank you for your patience and for always complying with our Covid safety guidelines. We will remain faithful in doing so as this is an act of caring and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. If you have any questions or concerns about Hope UCC's Covid plans, please contact the church office, any member of the Covid Task Force, or our Council President, Grady Birdsell. Thank you again for your cooperation and support during this challenging year.