

December 20 welcome and announcements

Welcome to worship on this 4th and final Sunday of Advent 2020.

We're planning a Zoom Christmas Eve service this week. We have a couple of lessons learned from the Thanksgiving Eve service, one of which is we should each be on earphones rather than using our computer speakers. We have some on hand next Sunday for everyone to take one to use for Christmas Eve – they are on the deacon's bench in the downstairs entrance. If there are none there, say so, because a reserve of them has been set aside. If you are not onsite for worship, we will also have them available tomorrow when we are open for food bank (December 21). Ask Lori or Bill for one if you drop by then. We'll have them at the side door entry into the Vestry.

Oxford County remains in yellow status for schools due to the county's high positivity rate and new cases per capita. We should all be concerned about what is nothing short of explosive growth in covid rates in the county. Nursing homes account for some of that, but much is simply all of us taking too many risks or just not paying attention. This is very real and deadly. We will see how the county does over the next week+, but there is a real chance we will need to close for in person worship soon. The state has made masks mandatory in all public areas and, perhaps, part of what we each can do for public health and the common good is to simply walk away from any situation where there are unmasked people, particularly indoors.

I'm sure that everyone is aware of the start of vaccinations with the Pfizer vaccine last week and the likely start of the Moderna vaccinations this week. That is all good news, even though the actual numbers are low due to supply. Equally good news is that Johnson and Johnson's conventional vaccine phase 3 trial is fully enrolled (and bigger than either Pfizer or Moderna's) and ongoing. J&J is hoping for sufficient data to get FDA approval in late January for a February rollout. This is significant because the current trial is for single dose (a two dose trial is starting, as well), it is a conventional vaccine vector (which makes it

easier to ship and store), and the company has huge manufacturing capacity. The Federal government has already purchased 100 million doses of this and has an option on another 200 million. So, the good news is that if the Phase 3 trial is good the company's output can meet most of the remaining U.S. needs after the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine stocks are exhausted. But, in the meantime, we need to be careful and take care of each other.

Let us prepare to worship God.