

# PROPOSAL FOR RETURN TO MULTIPLATFORM WORSHIP FOLLOWING OMICRON WAVE

January 20, 2022

Last fall, UUCC resumed in-person worship following the careful recommendations of the Regathering Team. On September 5, 2021, our services moved to a multiplatform format with 20 in-person attendees and 155 virtual Zoom connections. In-person attendance numbers increased slowly through the fall and winter months, peaking at 66 individuals in Sanctuary C on December 19, 2021.

In early January 2022, UUCC's staff returned from the holiday break (during which services were virtual-only) and made the decision to pause in-person attendance for Sunday services through the end of January due to safety concerns presented by the Omicron variant. This decision was announced to the congregation on January 4, 2022.

As we near the end of January, we are looking ahead to when we can safely regather in Sanctuary C on Sunday mornings and invite UUCC groups back inside OBIC. It would be foolhardy to select an arbitrary date at which to declare Omicron "over" and conditions safe for regathering. For that reason, the UUCC staff proposes the following metric to guide our plans for regathering:

When Howard County **test positivity** rates (7-day average, per the Howard County Covid-19 [dashboard](#)) have dropped **below 10% for 7 consecutive days**, we will resume in-person worship following the same protocols outlined by the Regathering Team in fall 2021 (includes: registration, masking, limited attendance, physical distancing, no indoor food). Howard County's positivity rate was last below 10% in mid-December 2021, and 7 days below this threshold would allow UUCC to confidently invite congregants to a safe return to Sanctuary C.

Here are a few considerations that informed our choice of this metric:

- Our underlying objective is to reduce strain on our local and regional healthcare facilities. In recent weeks, Omicron has burdened our local hospitals. However, hospitalizations statewide and regionally are dropping rapidly, and today, there is no scarcity of hospital resources for those most at-risk in our region.
- Due to the nature of Omicron, vaccinated individuals are at a lower risk of illness resulting from Covid-19. Because of high vaccination rates in Howard County and within the UUCC congregation, community transmission between congregants – which we hope does not occur – is not likely to result in an increase in hospitalizations.
- We expect our return to in-person worship to follow the pattern of gradual increase we saw last fall. Congregants will choose to attend in-person worship based on their own circumstances and comfort levels, and we do not expect high attendance levels immediately. Children's religious education and other group gatherings will resume at their own pace to serve the specific needs and circumstances of those groups.