

Recovery Team Report to Congregational Meeting – August 16, 2020

In mid-March, 2020, the WHO characterized COVID-19 as a Pandemic. Soon gatherings were restricted or forbidden, there were “shelter in place” orders, and the Meeting House was closed.

In early May, 2020, our Board of Trustees created the Recovery Team task force (President Susan Richards, Rev. Linda Simmons, Cheryl Creighton, and Paul Stewart) to develop and propose plans for the use of the Meeting House for in-person services and other gatherings. SHIM expressed their interest in re-opening immediately; Congregation Shirat HaYam (CSHY) said they were not considering an immediate re-opening but were still considering their options for later, especially their High Holy Days; the Muslim Prayer Group (MPG) said they were interested in their usual Friday mid-day use in July and August; and we UUs decided we would not re-open for in-person services over the Summer (with reconsideration in August).

Based on current Massachusetts regulations (particularly, seating ‘immediate households’ at least 6 feet from each other), the capacity of Hendrix Hall is 12 – 24 individuals (depending on the number in each household) and the sanctuary capacity is 36 – 84. White pew sections are properly spaced and COVID-usable. →

Further, HH has poor ventilation, whereas the sanctuary has good natural ventilation. For those reasons, we concluded that only the sanctuary is COVID-usable for services or gatherings.

The plan developed for the initial reopening was to physically separate the Front of the Meeting House (the sanctuary, HH, and the small bathroom) from the Rear (the office, AR, children’s area, kitchen, and large bathroom) with locking doors, and to allow SHIM the exclusive use of the Front, while the UUs and MPG alternate use of the Rear.

In July, Shirat HaYam confirmed their wish to hold events (e.g., High Holy days) in the sanctuary in September. SHY will have the main use of the sanctuary in September, although SHIM will have a week in the middle of the month.

As long as the Pandemic is a concern, and state and local regulations are similar to what they are currently, we have no practical plan to suggest other than the current one (one congregation has exclusive use of the sanctuary for a period of weeks).

The sanctuary has good natural ventilation by opening the windows and doors. However, it has no heat, and adding a heating system will be difficult, and ineffective with the windows and doors open for the required ventilation. Use of the sanctuary will likely be uncomfortable during the Winter months!

Hendrix Hall has poor ventilation, but it does have heat and air conditioning. Adding COVID-effective ventilation in HH is likely to be technically challenging. However, even vastly improved ventilation will not increase the allowed occupancy limit of 12 – 24 individuals.

The Board will consider these HVAC issues, and others, at their Zoom meeting on Thursday, August 20. All Members are welcome to Zoom in to Board meetings to watch your Trustees at work and to hear what is being discussed!

Sanctuary Pews; not to scale!						
South Aisle	South Pew Section 1	South pew Section 2	Center Aisle	North Pew Section 1	North Pew Section 2	North Aisle
Front aisle						Front aisle
Row 1	Exit Door					Row 1
Row 2						Row 2
Row 3						Row 3
Row 4						Row 4
Row 5						Row 5
Row 6						Row 6
Row 7						Row 7
Row 8						Row 8
Row 9						Row 9
Row 10						Row 10
Row 11						Row 11
Row 12						Row 12
Row 13						Row 13
Row 14						Row 14
Row 15						Row 15
Row 16	Open for an usher			Open for an usher		Row 16
Back Aisle						Back Aisle
Average pew is			34.50	inches deep (front to back, West to East)		
Therefore must leave			3	pews empty between occupied pews		
That provides			8.625	feet between occupied pews		
The above picture shows			14	occupiable pews, each of which may contain 1 to 6 (or more, if kids) people.		
plus			2	occupiable ‘amen’ pews in front,		
plus			2	on the dais		
and			2	standing or in chairs in the back doorways		
This means the total occupancy, figuring an average of			2	persons per household, is		
figuring an average of			5	persons per household, is		
				36		
				84		