



Mount Vernon United Methodist Church

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Dear friends and family of Mount Vernon UMC,

As we have just begun a new year with new hopes and dreams, we find ourselves facing the weariness and frustrations of old burdens. The omicron variant is spreading rapidly and we are seeing an unprecedented surge of cases with one million cases in a single day already in this new year. At the beginning of this pandemic the district and conference gave us guidance on only being together in person if the positivity rate is below above 5-10%, [currently, in Fairfax Country that rate is nearly 39%](#).

After prayer, reflection and conversation with our Healthy Church Team and with pastors of other UM churches in our area, to be as safe as possible, we are going to move all church ministry and activities to virtual for the remainder of January. Some projections say the next 4-6 weeks will be incredibly tough for our country as this new variant continues to spread. Near the end of the month we will reexamine where things stand as we discern safe practices for February. To care for one another and our community we want to do what we can to help limit the spread of this highly contagious variant.

We will be recording our full worship service in the sanctuary with the organ and one signer who will lead us in the hymns. The service, along with the bulletin and hymn lyrics will be posted on our website and emailed out to everyone by 9:30am Sunday mornings.

Please know that I fully understand feelings of disappointment, frustration, and exhaustion with the pandemic, and what feels like another setback. The decisions we make in these times are not just to protect ourselves but to also protect and care for our neighbors. The decisions and safety precautions we make directly impact other people in our community. We know that to help stop the spread we rely on vaccines and booster shots, wearing safe and effective masks whenever you go out, maintaining social distance, and following the wisdom and expertise of scientists and medical professionals, knowing that science continues to change and evolve as more information is discovered. We continue to hold deeply in prayer all essential workers and continue to discern how we can care for and show our appreciation and gratitude to essential workers all across our community.

God continues to be present with us in these difficult and burdening times. I invite us to be prayerful and open to the ways God is speaking and inviting us to be witness of love to all.

Wishing you goodness and peace this day.

Rev. Jay Campbell