

For Immediate Release

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Providence RI — A broad coalition of faith leaders from across the state of Rhode Island has issued a brief statement regarding the re-opening of church buildings for worship.

While Phase II of the state's re-opening plan allows congregations to gather with restrictions, the leaders of several faith traditions are urging their members to take a slower and more deliberate pace. Having considered CDC guidelines and scientific studies, the Episcopal Diocese is joining with other faith traditions in encouraging its congregations to continue gathering online for worship rather than in person.

The text of the statement:

We recognize that congregational worship has a high risk of spreading COVID-19 and could jeopardize the safety and well-being of our congregants and our clergy members. All of our traditions prioritize the care of the most vulnerable as a cornerstone of our values. We are ever grateful for the right to freely worship and know that with it comes the responsibility to safeguard the greater good. We yearn to be worshipping together in our traditional worship spaces, but that time has not come.

We therefore resolve to continue our essential work from the safety of remote worship in combination with a slow, incremental, and cautious reopening for public worship. We recommend this caution out of concern for our own faith communities and the broader community given the CDC guidelines.

We are proud of the creativity and commitment of our faith leaders who have not let social distancing be spiritually alienating. We commit to continue our worship in these innovative ways and go forward with our plans for a slower reopening in concert with the guidelines provided by our individual movements and faith traditions.

We are grateful to Governor Raimondo and her staff for their judicious and meticulous use of medical science and data to drive their decision-making processes while reopening Rhode Island. We are thankful for her trust in us as faith leaders and look forward to our continued partnership for the greater good of our state.

In faith and hope,

Rev. Marilyn B. Kendrix,

Bridge Conference Minister, Southern New England Conference, UCC

The Right Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely

Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island

Rabbi Sarah Mack
President, Board of Rabbis of Greater Rhode Island

Rev. Elizabeth Lerner Maclay
Minister, the First Unitarian Church of Providence

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Bridge Conference Minister, Southern New England Conference, UCC

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