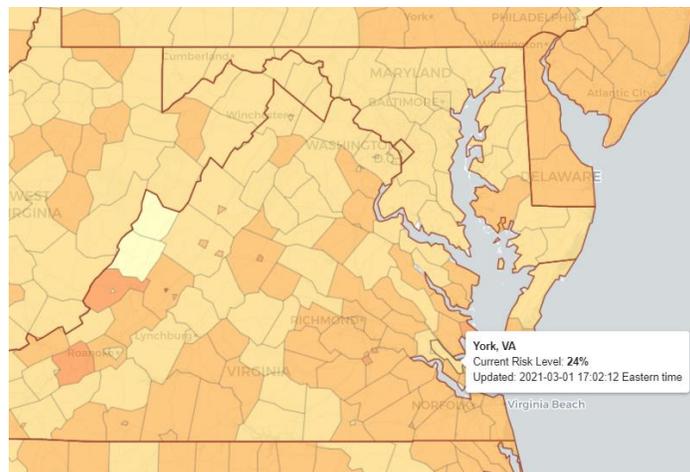


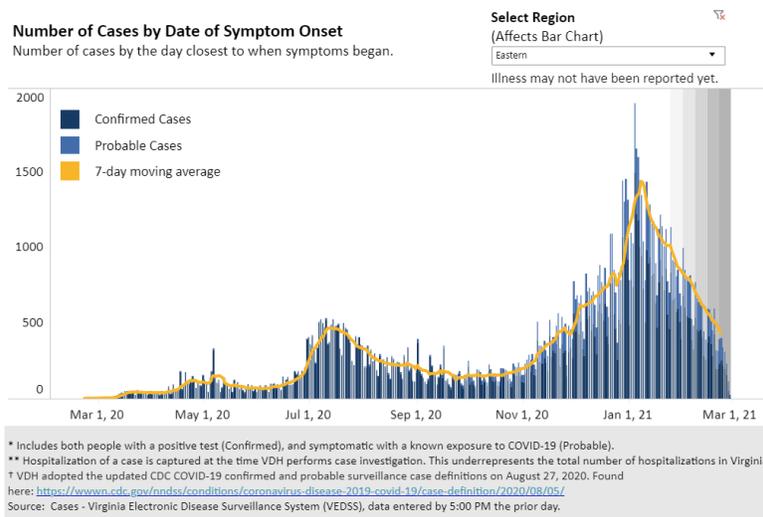
Healthy Church Team Article for Crooks Memorial E-News 02 March 2021

COVID-19 remains a serious concern. The Healthy Church Team (HCT) continues to meet at least twice per month and is closely monitoring metrics from a variety of sources to assess when the conditions will make it possible for the resumption of in-person worship in the Sanctuary.

- The Georgia Tech COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool indicates there is currently a 24% chance in York County that at least one COVID-19 positive individual will be present in a 50-person gathering. This is a decline from the 48% chance shown in our February HCT update.



- The Virginia Department of Health data for the Eastern Region continues to show a decline in the 7-day average of new COVID-19 cases. The number is down to approximately where we were in the summer of 2020.



- The York County School Division Health Metrics Dashboard, based on data from the Peninsula Health District, indicates we remain at the highest level for risk of COVID-19 transmission, although the data is trending toward the next lower level of risk.

Indicators	Lowest	Lower	Moderate	Higher	Highest
Core Indicators					
Number of new cases per 100,000 persons within the last 7* or 14 days**	<5	5 to <20	20 to <50	50 to ≤ 200	>200
Eastern Region*					←
Larger Peninsula**					←←
York County**					←←←
Percentage of RT-PCR tests that are positive during the last 7* or 14 days**	<3%	3% to <5%	5% to <8%	8% to ≤ 10%	>10%
Eastern Region*					←
Larger Peninsula**					←←
York County**					←←←
Ability of the school to implement 5 key mitigation strategies.	Implemented all 5 strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented all 5 strategies correctly but inconsistently	Implemented 3-4 strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented 1-2 strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented no strategies
York County	✗				

Ensuring the health and safety of the Crooks Memorial congregation has been the HCT’s primary concern in the COVID-19 environment. While the data indicates **it is not yet prudent to resume in-person worship services in the Sanctuary**, there are some hopeful signs.

As we have previously reported, your Crooks Memorial HCT has developed plans for in-person worship, both indoors and outdoors. These plans specify steps we will take to mitigate the COVID-19 risks as much as is practicable. Late last week the Virginia Annual Conference adjusted portions of the Technical Assistance Manual (TAM) that provides Virginia United Methodist Churches the requirements for conducting activities in the COVID-19 environment. The update provides more opportunity for the partaking of pre-packaged communion elements indoors, the placement of worship materials in the pews, the gathering of offerings, and the conduct of children’s time during the worship service, among other things. The HCT is working to quickly incorporate the updated TAM guidance into our approved plans for outdoor and indoor worship services.

The improving trends in the COVID-19 data and the increasing availability of the COVID-19 vaccines indicate that, while it is not yet specifically known, **the day is approaching when Crooks Memorial UMC will be able to bring our congregation**

back together for in-person worship. Please understand we will do this only when the conditions and our risk mitigation procedures make us confident it is safe to do so. And please also understand that when we resume, **worship will not look or feel exactly as it did before COVID-19 struck.** Here is a preview:

- There will be a requirement to RSVP and acknowledge your health status before attending the service.
- On arrival, you will be directed to park with an empty space on both sides to ensure social distancing (6 feet) while getting out and into vehicles.
- Everyone, regardless of age, must wear a mask at least two layers thick and maintain social distancing (6 feet) from non-household members.
- Attendance will be limited to approximately 50 persons and certain pews will not be available for seating.
- Doors in the narthex and at the front of the sanctuary will be propped open to improve ventilation in the sanctuary (weather permitting).
- There will be limited bathroom access and no access to the water fountains.
- Hymnals and Bibles will be available in the pew backs, but must be used by only one person (each person may bring their own Bible or hymnal).
- Worship will include prayers, Scripture, sermon, music (live and/or recorded), limited spoken liturgy, and communion. There will be limited singing at outdoor services and no singing at indoor services.
- When communion is celebrated, we will be using pre-packaged elements that you will take from a table as you arrive at the service and take to your seat, will be consecrated during the service, and can then be consumed by momentarily removing your mask.
- Offerings will be gathered by having you place them in offering boxes in the narthex, instead of passing the collection plate from person to person. (On-line giving remains as a healthy alternative for your offerings.)
- We will need volunteers in addition to those who are leading the worship service. These include parking assistance, welcome station check-in, ushers to guide participants to socially distanced seating, a post-service cleaning team, AV for

sound, recording, and possibly live streaming (so we can continue to offer worship services to those not yet comfortable or able to return to in-person worship).

Now that you have this preview of what in-person worship will look like when we resume, we need to know about your interest, willingness, or concerns on returning to in-person worship. To do this, the HCT is preparing a survey you will receive by the middle of March. You will be asked to complete and return the survey to us within a week of receiving it. Your responses will be important as we assess how best to resume our in-person worship services. More details on the survey will be provided in the Crooks E-News next week.

In the meantime, stay healthy and stay connected. As the Crooks family, we will get through the challenges of COVID-19 safely and together.

Bob Van Zandt
HCT Chairperson