



## January 27, 2021: Second Update on CLERGY AND COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

[January 21, 2021: First Update from Massachusetts Council of Churches on Clergy and COVID-19 Vaccinations](#)

The Massachusetts Council of Churches [core values](#) commit us to delight, excellence, diversity, relationships and gratitude. During the pandemics, we've been particularly aware of the need for equity in all of our work, especially through the work of the [One Church Fund](#). We believe access to information is an issue of equity. And, there has been unequal access to information and resources throughout COVID-19 because of racism, classism, sexism, and geographic privileging. We may be in the same storm, but not everyone has the same boat. Some have been left adrift without trustworthy maps, enough life vests, or sufficient food while others can ride out the storm in far safer boats with greater access to life-saving supplies. As Christians, we trust Jesus Christ to always be at the helm, and yet it is incumbent upon us all to see, name, and act faithfully upon our very different situations.

**According to the current Massachusetts COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Timeline (as of 1/27/21 2:00 pm), clergy are *only* mentioned as a distinct category in one place in the state's COVID-19 vaccine guidelines: at the end of Phase 1 as "Health care workers doing non-COVID-facing care."** We confirmed this again this week with our contacts in state government. If you disagree with status, you are strongly encouraged to advocate to the [Baker/Polito Administration COVID-19 Advisory Committee](#) at [COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov](mailto:COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov) for a different status in the [process outlined in the first update](#). Thus, according to the state's guidelines, clergy are *only* eligible for vaccination at this time if they are "members of the clergy (if working in patient-facing roles)," employed by nursing homes, prisons, jails, hospitals, long-term care facilities or other congregate care settings.

Given that there has been information shared to some clergy but not all, we want to share the information below with you, *even though* it is outside of the official state protocols for clergy vaccination. The Massachusetts Council of Churches is not endorsing this route. But the information is available in some spaces. **We believe access to information is an issue of equity, as each clergy person makes their own faithful decision in discernment with their family, their community, their Church, their tradition, their personal ethics, their sense of trust in the health care system, historic inequality and many other concerns.** We also need to name that the vaccines for clergy through Steward will privilege some clergy over others, particularly those on the Eastern half of the state, those who can drive and have the flexibility to travel, those who can easily and quickly take time off to go for a vaccination without caregiving responsibilities, and those who already trust the health care system to serve them safely.

Outside of the state's guidelines, the nation's largest private, for-profit provider Steward Health Care system is offering vaccines to Massachusetts clergy. Steward Health Care was founded when the former non-profit Roman Catholic Caritas Christi health care system was bought in 2010. Steward's decision to offer clergy vaccinations [is outside the state's guidelines](#), but within their purview of what the private business has the right to do since they, as a private business, bought these vaccines. If you wish to pursue this route for vaccination, the number to call is 877-358-8794. Identify yourself as clergy and someone will return your call. [Steward hospitals](#) are in Dorchester, Brockton, Haverhill, Methuen, Taunton, Ayer, Stoughton, Norwood, Fall River and Brighton.

We hope this helps to clarify some what we know is an unclear process. The Massachusetts Council of Churches will continue to post updates on our [social media](#), [website](#), and [newsletter](#) if there are changes to clergy status in the Massachusetts distribution timeline.

Bless you, Church. We know and share the weariness of these days. May we continue to see and support one another, trusting Jesus Christ our Savior at the helm.