

July 3, 2020

Beloved Christ Church Family,

I'm happy to announce that we are completing preparations to return to in-person worship at Christ Church. Bishop Gutierrez approved our re-entry plan, and the Vestry set July 19 as the first Sunday for re-opening the church. On July 12, Vestry and Health and Safety Committee members will be present at the service for a "walk-through" of our new protocols for worship.

While we rejoice at the opportunity to worship side-by-side again, our protocols will require significant changes in our practices. These changes are necessary to comply with CDC and diocesan guidelines to help prevent the spread of COVID 19. The plan provides all the recommended protections for large group gatherings to remove as much risk as possible; however, it does not remove all risk.

Church gatherings are still considered among the highest risk activities during the pandemic. Thus, if you are in a vulnerable group, or feel at all uncomfortable about being in large groups, please do not feel pressured to attend mass. The most prudent thing to do is wait. Live-streaming of the service will continue. Home communion visits will resume on July 19.

These are the key features of our plan:

- No more than 25 congregants in total can attend a service. That number includes the priest, servers, ushers, and so on. To manage attendance for the remaining slots, we will offer an online sign-up procedure. On any given Sunday, only those signed up for the service can attend.
- Attendees will be checked for symptoms upon entry, and their names will be recorded. Those who are symptomatic, or who have been in recent contact with those who are, will not be admitted.
- Entry will be through the side door, and exit will be through the front doors. Those who cannot use stairs may exit by the side door.
- Masks and social distancing will be required at all times when you are on church property and in the building. Your mask must cover both your mouth and your nose.
- Singing will not be allowed, though humming with a mask on is permitted.
- The sanctuary will be thoroughly cleaned before the service. All books, cushions, and other materials will be removed from pews. Bulletins will contain all things necessary for the service.
- Communion will be of the Body of Christ only, and will be received standing at the entry to the chancel. The wafer will be consumed after the communicant has returned to the pew.
- Gathering before or after the service will not be allowed. Please arrive no earlier than 20 minutes before the service.

Though our county has moved into the "green phase" of reopening, at the Bishop's request we will be operating under "yellow phase" guidelines until reopening's impact can be properly assessed.

The Vestry members, parishioners, and staff who comprised the Health and Safety Committee were very careful in their design of this plan. The group included health care professionals, and we believe this plan provides optimal health and safety for those who choose to attend mass. Nonetheless, the plan does not mitigate all risk. Until there is a corona virus vaccine, the safest, most risk-free course is not to come to church.

This has been a very challenging time in the life of the Church. We have been on a wilderness journey during this time of pandemic and social unrest, causing us to reexamine who God is in our lives, and who we are as the Body of Christ, the Church. In this wilderness, just as with our forebearers, we have discovered God fully sustaining us. We have been reawakened to the living Church, not the stone and mortar building, but the Spirit of God, working in and among and through us, to carry out God's plan to reconcile all things to God and one another in Christ. We have experienced this reality in the caring and love we have shared, even across computer screens. We have been awakened to the plight of the least of those among us, those who were most acutely affected by this pandemic. As we cautiously return to the building which contains this sacred Body, may we never forget the lessons we have learned, and may we continue to grow as Christ Church, empowered to love, serve, and lead in Christ Jesus.

In the love of Christ,

Ernie+