



St. Mary's Episcopal Church

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The Twenty-first Wednesday after Pentecost; October 21, 2020

Dear St. Mary's Parish Family,

Last month, as we observed the Feast Day of St. Mary together, I pointed our attention to St. Paul's words about the timing. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children." This reminds us of God's presence in our lives, in real time. And from that truth, I have been praying for us (as individuals, a parish, a diocese, and more) to be given clarity by God about when "the fullness of time" arrives regarding the various decisions that we have to make regarding our common worship life. Thank you to those of you who have been helpful in this conversation too! I am glad to share with you that on **Sunday, November 9**, St. Mary's will return to holding its principle Sunday services in our indoor sanctuaries, carefully following the parameters below. Consecration Sunday (Oct 25) and Confirmation Sunday with Bishop Skirving (Nov 1) will be held outdoors.

Beginning November 9, our Sunday morning worship schedule will be as follows:

- 8:00am - Holy Eucharist: Rite 1 in the All Saints' Chapel (Please make a reservation - see below)
- 9:30am - Holy Eucharist: Rite 2 in the Church (Please make a reservation - see below)
- 10:45am - Christian Formation for Adults in Moseley Hall and via Zoom
- An online liturgy will continue to be provided each week for the foreseeable future, though it may occasionally come in the form of a livestream of an in-person liturgy. Stay tuned!
- We will also occasionally gather outdoors for worship on some Sunday afternoons/evenings. This will likely be on a monthly basis and will be announced as plans develop.
- We are making plans to have nursery services available and will share more as we're able.

The Starting Point Considerations:

St. Mary's continues to promote and affirm the following general steps for social distancing and reduction of transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus for all people:

- Maintain at least six feet of physical distancing between members of different households.
- Wear a face covering indoors. Also, wear them outdoors when 6-ft distance can't be maintained.
- Carry and regularly use hand sanitizer.
- Frequently wash hands using soap and water.
- Regularly clean all high touch surfaces.
- Stay at home if sick.

Any person described as a [“high-risk individual” with respect to COVID-19 impact](#) is encouraged to stay at home rather than risk any chance of infection. Digital resources for worship from home will continue to be offered through our [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) platforms.

Gatherings that are hosted at St. Mary’s will seek to minimize the amount of surfaces and materials that can be touched (altar rail, pew books, collection plates, etc.). Practices that necessitate coming within 6-ft of one another will be minimized or modified.

Occupancy, Seating, & Reservations

- Worshipers of different households must sit and remain at least 6-ft apart at all times.
- To maintain social distancing, not every pew will be available for seating. Those pews that are available will be clearly marked.
- Given the 6-ft radius between different households we anticipate the following pew capacities:
 - Chapel - 1 household per pew
 - Nave (center pews) - 1 household may sit at either end of pew if each household consists of 1 or 2 individuals. Larger households would likely not be able to share the pew with others.
 - Transepts (side pews) - Single-person households may sit at either end of pew. If a household has 2 or more individuals, no other household would likely be able to share the pew.
 - Balcony - 1 single-person household may sit at either end of pew. If a household has 2 or more individuals, no other household would likely be able to share the pew.
- Overflow seating will be in Moseley Hall with the audio (and hopefully video as well) made available. Overflow worship seating will be clearly designated as separate from Sunday School seating to avoid the requirement of cleaning in between groups.
- ***Because total occupancy will vary based on the number of individuals per household, please make a reservation for all indoor Sunday morning liturgies by calling the church office at 523-6146 during the week prior to the service.*** An online reservation option will likely be made available soon. No one will be turned away from worship! Reservations will help us prepare appropriate overflow spaces.

Preparations and Arrival/Departure for Indoor Worship

- All pews reserved for seating and other high-touch surfaces will be disinfected by the St. Mary’s cleaning staff on Friday and the sanctuaries will be locked until Sunday morning services. The Altar Guild will disinfect any other worship vessels that are brought out for use.
- Pew books will be removed from the pews until further notice. Worshippers are encouraged to BYOBible and BYOBookOfCommonPrayer!
- Bulletins will be available on our website. Worshipers are encouraged to print bulletins at home or view on their own device. Some bulletins will also be provided on a table in the Narthex.
- Hand sanitizer and face coverings will also be provided on the same table. ***All worshippers are required to wear face coverings properly for indoor worship.***
- Greeters and Ushers will be outdoors near the Narthex (weather permitting) in order to discourage congregating inside the Narthex. As with the outdoor liturgies, conversation and gathering should only take place outdoors where safe physical distancing may be observed.
- To reduce touching door handles and to increase outdoor air flow, the Narthex and outside doors should remain open as much as is reasonable.
- Bathrooms will be open, but are to be single-occupancy.
- Guidance will be given to worshippers to depart the liturgy beginning from rear of the church, observing social distancing.
- Until further notice, coffee hours and receptions will not be made available following worship.

Other Liturgical Considerations

- There will be one Lector per liturgy. who will be the only person speaking from the Lectern. The Officiant/Preacher will use a lapel microphone and Pulpit.
- Since singing produces an especially widespread aerosol even when face coverings are used, congregational singing continues to be suspended at this time. Instrumental music and solo singing ministries will continue to be offered at the 9:30am liturgy.
- An alms basin will be made available in the Narthex, on the table as worshippers enter/exit. Collection plates will not be passed throughout the congregation.
- The Altar party will generally consist of clergy, a crucifer, and two torchbearers.

Eucharist

- Following current diocesan guidelines, the Holy Eucharist will continue to be offered in “one kind” (bread) only. Some wine will be consecrated, but the common cup will not be shared. The Episcopal Church and Anglican Tradition have consistently taught that Christ is fully present in the bread and fully present in the wine of communion. To receive in "one kind" is not to receive "half communion" and has been a common practice for a variety of reasons in extraordinary times.
- For those who would prefer to not receive the bread at Eucharist, a prayer for Spiritual Communion will be included in the bulletin.
- The Clergy will wash hands before the liturgy and use hand sanitizer immediately before and after the Eucharistic Prayer and distribution of communion. The communion bread will be placed discreetly into the hands of each communicant, being careful to avoid touching hands. A sanitizing wipe will be carried during the distribution of communion in case contact is made.
- Those who wish to receive the bread will be asked to stand at the time of distribution so that it is known where the communion bread should be taken. Several medical professionals of our community have recommended that bringing the Eucharist to worshipers (rather than worshipers coming to a communion station) is the safest option at this time.
- Communicants should adjust face coverings to consume the bread only after they are 6-ft away from others outside their household again.

Friends, this is where we are *now*. One thing that we’ve learned in 2020 is that plans change. What has been described above is not permanent. It’s not “new normal.” It’s where we have discerned we are to be at this time.

In the fullness of time, I am convinced that we will be able to safely regain more practices and rhythms of ministry, community, and worship that have been life-giving to the faithful for generations. I also am convinced that we are learning some valuable lessons from this season of life that are meant to be incorporated into future seasons to help us be the church that we are meant to be in each time. I recognize that each individual and household will have unique factors which inform their discernment about what are right and fitting ways to live out their lives of faith in this time. But in every case, may our prayers and love for one another and the world bind us together joyfully in Christ Jesus.

Peace,



The Rev. Thomas P.H. Warren, Rector

Link to the [October 16, 2020 Diocesan Pastoral Letter and Revised Guidelines for Public Worship during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#) and the NC DHHS “[Interim Guidance for Places of Worship](#).”