



St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Where all are welcome at the Lord's table

Dear Friend,

It has been so long since I have been able to welcome you into St. Luke's! Today, it gives me great pleasure to say that **we will resume indoor worship at St. Luke's beginning August 2**. As has been our custom, we will celebrate the Holy Eucharist at both 7:45 and 10:15. On the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, the 7:45 service will take place in our upper auditorium and the 10:15 service will take place in the sanctuary. On the 2nd and 4th Sundays, the reverse will be true.

To ensure that there is a minimum of 6 ft. between one worshipping "unit" and another, the capacity in the sanctuary will be limited to approximately 80 worshippers and in the auditorium, 44 worshippers. **Strange as it might be, I ask that each week you sign up to attend a particular service by way of the Signup Genius vehicle we will make available on our website.** If you cannot utilize the website, you also may call the parish offices (884-4116) and reserve space with Christina.

This decision to reopen has been made based upon the statistics, science, and guidelines provided by both our Bishop and governor. It comes at a time when a special steering committee has deemed prudent and reasonable. Let me say here, I am grateful to this group, consisting of Rodney Ayers, Margaret Clifton, Kathy Lynch, Steve McLoughlin, and Gary Schweizer. Our parish has been well served by their wisdom, expertise, and planning.

After several meetings, we have arrived at a re-opening protocol that marries now-common social practices with our long-standing liturgical practices. A full description of this protocol can be found below. In brief, our plans were driven by the desires to maintain proper social distancing, reduce bottlenecks as people enter and exit worship, minimize movement, and, most especially, mitigate risk of transmission.

I recognize that there is no amount of planning which will eliminate all risk of infection. And because of this reality, I fully understand that some of you will choose not to worship at church. Rest assured, **we also will film and post Morning Prayer, just as we have been doing these many months.**

One last note regarding the opening of our campus. I have written a letter to groups and individuals previously renting our space, outlining the rooms available again for use and the parameters necessary for that use. While I think it appropriate to allow them to resume activities, I ask that our parish committees not meet on campus, but rather, continue meeting by way of Zoom.

Finally, I want to assure you that the steering committee and I will continue to evaluate both the virus trends here in Rhode Island as well as our practices at St. Luke's. Should either dictate, we will make decisions always with your safety and well-being as the greatest concern.

Again, I am excited by the prospect of laying eyes on many of you for the first time since my sabbatical began in December. Please know, whether or not I am able to greet you in the church, you all are in my daily prayers.

May you be well. And may the time come that we all might worship again under one roof.

Peace,

Jim

Worship Expectations and Protocol (August, 2020)

- Worshippers will be asked to attend services only if they are not experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19.
- Worshippers will be asked to enter through one door only—
 - For worship in the sanctuary, please enter through the cemetery gate and door by the parking lot.
 - For worship in the upper auditorium, please enter through our main entrance, then pass through the atrium into the memorial garden, and then come in to the auditorium by way of the single door to the right of the logia. **Note: If negotiating stairs are difficult, please enter the auditorium by way of the sanctuary and logia.**
- Worshippers will be asked to use the hand sanitizer upon entering the worship space.
- All worshippers will wear masks for the entirety of the service.
- If an individual comes without a mask, an usher will provide a mask—again a mask is required for participating in worship.
- Individuals will remain a minimum of 6 feet apart (whether standing or sitting) for the entirety of the time on church premises (i.e., while in the parking lot, while waiting to enter worship, or while in the worship space).
- Worshippers will be shown by ushers to a place in the pews or seat that guarantees 6 feet of distance in every direction relative to the next worshipper. (Please be patient with your ushers!)
- Worshippers with small children will be asked to keep their children in the pews as opposed to allowing them to gather in the back of the church.
- Worshippers will provide contact information by signing the cards provided by ushers. At the conclusion of the service, please place your card in the appropriately marked box, where it will be kept for 3 weeks.
- At this time, worshippers will be asked to refrain from singing throughout the service. Congregational responses at other times during the liturgy are acceptable.
- At the time of “the Peace,” worshippers will be asked to remain in place and simply acknowledge one another with a respectful bow or some other appropriate gesture.
- For the distribution of communion, clergy will come to each person at his/her place in the pews or seats. Communion will be in the form of the host only.
- In lieu of passing the plates for a collection, worshippers will be asked to drop their offerings in collection boxes placed at the back of the church or auditorium.
- Worshippers will be allowed to use the 1st floor hallway bathrooms nearest the worship space assigned for that service.
- At the conclusion of the service, worshippers will be directed by the ushers to 1 of 2 exits.
- Regrettably, at this time, there will be no coffee hour.
- Worshippers will be asked not to congregate in the halls for personal conversations.