

An Announcement About Worship

My dear friends,

I have been waiting many months to say this: after careful consideration by the re-opening task force, we have decided to resume in-person worship at St. Luke's on Sunday, March 21.

It feels like much longer than four months since we last held in-person worship at St. Luke's. During that time, we have been sustained by the musical contributions of choir members and Rodney as well as the spoken words of lay readers. Hearing your voices in one form or another has reminded me that no matter where we pray, we are one body, worshipping together. I am so very grateful to all of you who have shared your gifts for our virtual worship.

But now, with the COVID statistics dramatically decreased, many of you already vaccinated, and effective mitigating protocols in place, it seems safe to offer again in-person worship.

As we did in the last few weeks of the fall, we will have both services in the sanctuary, employing the following protocols:

1. Please wear a mask from the time you step out of your car until you return to your car at the conclusion of your visit to St. Luke's.
2. Please adhere to the social distancing norms of 6 ft. during the entire time you are on church grounds.
3. Please enter the sanctuary through the cemetery gates.
4. Please sit in the properly designated pews as directed by an usher, to allow for 6 feet of separation between one worshipping person (or family) and another.
5. Please refrain from walking up or down the aisles once inside the sanctuary.
6. Please exit through either the cemetery door or Church St. door upon the conclusion of the service.
7. Please complete a contact tracing card and place it in the baskets upon exiting the sanctuary.

Like during those fall months, we will work to maximize air flow in the sanctuary (so wear a coat!), we will bring communion to you in the pews, offering only the wafer, and we will limit the total amount of time in church to no more than 60 minutes.

I do believe these practices will mitigate risk of transmission greatly and effectively. But as I expressed at the end of the summer, if you still do not feel safe coming for in-

person worship, do not worry. We will continue to provide virtual worship, as we have throughout this pandemic.

One final thing: also as before, **we ask that you do your best to sign up in advance of Sunday services.** Seating still will be restricted due to the 6 ft. distancing, and we expect (hope) that the church will be filled to maximum capacity given the limited seating. Ushers will seat those first who have signed up in advance, but 5 minutes before the start of services, unregistered worshipers will be given any available seats. *(And yes, I recognize this is crazy if not antithetical to the inclusive welcome we typically offer, but these continue to be strange if not crazy times.)*

The sign-up genius will be active and available at our web site by Wednesday, March 17.

My dear brothers and sisters, whether you are near or far, my faith is strengthened by the thought that we make our faith journey together. But there is no denying, my spirits will be lifted by your company, should you attend in-person worship on the 21st.

May you be safe and well. And may God bless us with a sense of God's nearness as we move through these final weeks of Lent.

Lenten blessings,

Jim