

Your Task Force continues to work towards re-opening the building to accommodate everyone's needs – while keeping everyone safe and complying with CDC, State and Synod directives.

You will be happy to learn that

- We will return to worshipping in the Sanctuary on Sunday October 18th, at 9:30am, to include Communion with both the Bread and Wine. Outdoor worship will cease at this time.
- The office will re-open on Oct. 12th with staff returning to their normal schedule.

COVID-19 SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR WORSHIPPING AND FOR ENTERING THE OFFICE

FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES WILL BE SENT TO YOU EARLY IN OCTOBER.

There remains the Committees (especially for All Committee Night) and various other groups (such as Book Club, Sewing Group and Men's Group) who desire to meet in the church. We had a plan and a start date to welcome these folks back into the building; however, with the resignation of our Sexton, we are currently without anyone to perform housekeeping duties and, especially, disinfect the building in compliance with COVID guidelines. The Task Force and Council extensively discussed this issue. We want everyone who enters our building to know that we are taking every precaution to keep you safe. We cannot give that assurance without a Sexton or a team of dedicated volunteers. Therefore, we are postponing the opening of the building for committees and groups through the balance of September and October. As we recruit to hire a new Sexton, and request temporary volunteers from the congregation, we will re-evaluate for November. Living in the world of COVID, accommodating everyone's wishes and keeping parishioner's safe is not an easy task. Please be patient and understanding.

As we solve this challenge, committees that typically meet on All Committee Night will be informed that they can return to the building on the first Wednesday. For now you should plan to meet off-site for October. We will keep you informed regarding November.

We invite anyone who desires to schedule a meeting or a project over the coming weeks to notify the Task Force. Please provide dates, times, estimated number of people and purpose. In this way we will have your information as we strive to meet your needs.

We would like to share some of the challenges we have been required to work through in order to offer a worship service and to open the building. Please read on.

MESSAGES FROM OUR BISHOP, JAMES DUNLOP

Since York County moved to the Green phase and as recent as July 16th, Bishop Dunlop has directed, *"Do not hold indoor worship with more than 25 people."* This requirement was proving to be difficult. How many services would we need to offer when our outdoor service averages 55 – 65 and the largest number has been 73? Where would we hold services while maintaining disinfected surroundings? How would we manage safe distancing with multiple groups entering and exiting the building? We are fortunate to have an established Outdoor Service to get us through the summer. We surveyed area

churches to learn what they are doing and learned there are an equal variety of worship opportunities being offered: Outside, Virtual, and Inside with limited seating of 25.

Then on September 11th we received the following from Bishop Dunlop, *“As you may be aware, this week Gov. Wolf loosened capacity restrictions for restaurants and some businesses beginning Sept 21st. we believe it is safe to begin worshipping in our buildings at 50% capacity as of September 21. Caution exhibited to this point effectively prevented outbreaks in our congregations. Please continue to reduce the risk of spread through physical distancing, proper sanitation protocol, and use of face coverings”*

The ability to worship at 50% capacity in our sanctuary clears the way for an easier transition. However, there are still many protocols that we must work through. Stay tuned for additional information on safety procedures for worshipping in our sanctuary.

SINGING

Singing is another area we have wrestled with since there are many opinions about the risk factors. Our choirs have been awaiting the release of various university studies that focus on the spread of aerosol droplets. Preliminary studies have been released showing that the spread of aerosol droplets from singing (with a mask) are not significantly greater than speaking (with a mask). Therefore, our vocal choirs are making plans, practices will begin, small combos will be performing at worship.

LATEST ADVICE FROM THE CDC

In their September update, the CDC shares:

- Spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (within about 6 feet). This type of transmission occurs via respiratory droplets.
- Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials.
- However, transmission of COVID-19 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented.
- It is unknown how long the air inside a room remains potentially infectious. Facilities need to consider factors such as the size of the room and the ventilation system design including flow rate and location of vents when deciding how long to close off rooms or areas.
- However, if it has been more than 7 days since use, additional cleaning and disinfection of a room/area is not necessary.

We hope this information gives you some insight into the complexity of our challenges in opening the building to everyone and to moving worship inside.

We welcome your input, suggestions, concerns. Please feel free to contact any Task Force member: Pastor Burkhardt, Suzanne Butler, Carla Hausmann, Russ Johnson, Peg Sennett (Chair).