



Reverend Carla E. Roland, PhD
Rector

July 22, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to all of you and your loved ones in the name of God. As I write this letter, it has now been more than four months since we have worshipped together inside the sanctuary of St. Matthew & St. Timothy's. You all have been ever present in my prayers and thoughts. Over the last months New York State and New York City have made great improvements in their handling of the Covid Pandemic; uncertainty remains given the prevalence of Covid in many areas throughout the United States and around the world. We must remain proactive and vigilant.

This week NYC entered Phase IV of reopening, with some restrictions remaining regarding large gatherings and indoor dining among others. As I mentioned in my last letter, the bishop is now permitting in-person worship with required social distancing and precautions; it is permission but not obligation, each congregation can make its own decision for their own context. We are still aiming to begin our in-person worship on September 13th as conditions permit.

As much as any planning can be done at this time, it is in September that I expect that we will begin to be able to remember and celebrate the lives of those who have died and inter their ashes in the columbarium, break our fast of communion, and in the most basic form, be together in worship and prayer. All these things need to be balanced with the need to keep everyone safe and care for one another. Our returning to in-person worship is dependent on positivity rates remaining low. When we do return to in-person worship we will continue streaming worship on Sunday mornings on YouTube and Facebook, while also allowing folks to connect via Zoom.

On September 13, we will plan to gather in person on that day and celebrate Grandparents' Sunday and Back to School. In September I still do not foresee being able to have coffee hour and access to the kitchen will not be allowed. We know that for some coming to church will not happen until there is a vaccine. Furthermore, practically and for cost savings, we have not put the cooling tower in service, therefore, we cannot run the air conditioning in the Sanctuary or Parish Hall. It is not prudent to spend over \$20,000 to run the cooling tower for the benefit of less than a handful of persons. We want everyone to think about their risk and we do not want folks to expose themselves to illness by coming to church, especially because of age, health, or by taking public transportation; initially when returning to church will not in essence include any substantial interaction between parishioners or with the clergy.

SMST Team

This pandemic time has made church function differently, including the way the leadership, staff, and clergy exercise their various ministries. Unfortunately, it also means that transitions happen without the proper farewell. Deacon Pedro's assignment with SMST has ended; perhaps sometime in the future we can give him a proper SMST Farewell, in the meantime, below you will find his letter to the congregation.

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7/9/2020

Greetings beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I take this opportunity to bid farewell to all of you as I wish to inform you that my time at Saint Matthews in Saint Timothy's has come to an end.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of St. Matthew and St. Timothy's who have provided me with spiritual support during my two years as a postulant, and two years as a Deacon. I thank you for your constant support, guidance and for assisting me throughout this journey. Although we cannot say goodbye in person, as Covid has disrupted many plans, I will leave here with many joyful memories and growth.

As I move forward now to a new ministry, please know that I have you in my heart and in my mind and will always keep the faithful of SMST in my prayers. I wish you all the best of luck.

God bless and God speed. May the Lord continue to bless every one of you. And may the beloved mother Mary be your companion for evermore.

Thank you and God Bless.

Rev. Dn. Pedro Rodriguez, Jr.

As for me, I will be on vacation during the month of August visiting with my mom and family in Texas. I look forward to being with everyone in September. For pastoral emergencies please do not hesitate to call the office, send an email, or contact the wardens.

David is in the Office generally on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (9 to 3); Hilda is at the church Monday through Friday (9 to 5). Santana continues to offer programming online – Specifically, in August Evangelism during the SMST Squad time on Mondays at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Weekly Worship

There are three ways to connect to worship on Sunday morning at 10 a.m.

- On our Facebook Page SMSTChurch www.facebook.com/srstchurch/live
- On our YouTube Page (live tab) <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxn3nXo7nvo4xfhjK9xLnUA>
- On Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88045352307?pwd=UG9lUVlXb2dYNGhRV21ycjIHRlVtZz09>
 - The condensed Zoom information is Meeting ID: 880 4535 2307 with Password: 470534
 - From a landline call +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) and enter the Meeting ID: 880 4535 2307 with Password: 470534
- Coffee Hour follows **immediately** after the service on Zoom (same log-in information as worship).
- On YouTube and Facebook worship remains uploaded to be watched at other times.
- By Wednesday each week we will mail the readings and prayers for the upcoming Sunday, so that folks can have as a resource. We will offer this resource through email and will mail to those that we know do not have access to email. We hope that this will allow some of our parishioners to be able to call-in to Zoom and participate in worship.

We continue to Feast on the Word of God rather than share in the Holy Eucharist. This, in part, is so that none have the privilege to partake when others do not. As I shared in the previous letter, historically, there have been many occasions when people have not been able to partake of communion. The *Armed Services Prayer Book* of the Episcopal Church offer this prayer:

In union, O Lord, with your faithful people at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated, I desire to offer to you praise and thanksgiving. I remember your death, Lord Christ; I proclaim your resurrection; I await your coming in glory. Since I cannot receive you today in the Sacrament of your Body and Blood, I beseech you to come spiritually into my heart. Cleanse and strengthen me with your grace, Lord Jesus, and let me never be separated from you. May I live in you, and you in me, in this life and in the life to come. Amen.

Programming:

- Our Schedule from July 27 to September 12 is as follows:
 - July 27 – SMST Squad – Creative Make-up Hacks and other Fun Facts
 - July 29 – Intergenerational Bible Study – For the Bible Tells Me So
 - *August – A month of evangelism: Connecting with community – Speaking with others about our faith and life in Jesus. Mondays during SMST Squad – August 10, 17, 24, 31*
 - SMST Pen Pals for Love – Youth project continues.
- Whenever possible, we will look to have conversations on intentionally being an anti-racist congregation, working against narratives of anti-blackness, and living fully into our baptism.

Are you getting the weekly newsletter? If not, please let Mo. Carla know your email to sign you up. This has all the links to the Zoom gatherings and other social media. This email also has our most recent prayer list.

- Do you want to be part of a WhatsApp group? Let us Mo. Carla know

I continue to be deeply grateful for each of you caring for one another, keeping in touch and holding others in prayer.

Before September, as conditions permit, other programs, groups and tenants may begin using the church facilities. I am working along with the staff, working groups, and leadership of the church to develop plans that will help us most effectively use our facilities and serve the community, while safeguarding the health of all who use our facilities and sanctuary. To summarize:

Sunday Meals Program

We are actively working on reopening the Soup Kitchen and getting back to serving our neighbors. Our greatest need at the moment is cooking teams of 2 or 3 persons from the same household willing to cook on Sunday morning. All PPE will be provided and strict protocols for safety are in place. Please let us know if you can be one of the cooking teams.

Other programs/tenants

- We will require all that enter our facilities to wear masks.
- We will provide clean spaces and bathrooms for the use of each group. Bathrooms will be properly stocked.
- We will ask each program/group to provide their own masks and hand sanitizer.
- Each long-term renter will ensure the appropriate social distancing in their spaces.
- The maximum size of any group will be determined by the safest configuration that allows for social distancing, and by the capacity allowed by law. The lowest number will be upheld.
- For administrative tenants, we will ask that they wear masks in common spaces and to receive the public in their offices. Each person will be responsible for keeping their desk and other personal items clean.
- For the tutoring center, the space will be cleaned every night; they are responsible for cleaning tutoring desks and computers between users, as well as other common surfaces.

As I shared before, here is an outline of all the things that we are considering and are already actively working on for when we do see each other again in church.

In-person worship:

- Masks will be required for all worshippers, clergy, and staff. We will aim to provide masks to those who do not have them.
- We will have hand sanitizer available and encourage folks to wash their hands often.
- For social distancing, seating will be distributed along the entire sanctuary with only related persons being able to seat together. My sense is that the maximum capacity for worship will be of 50 persons, and this uses all pews, including the balcony and behind the altar. The legal capacity is no more than 33% of occupancy or social distancing – whichever is lower.
- Hugs and handshakes will not be allowed and will be strongly discouraged.
- Each person will pick up their own bulletin.
- All books will be removed from the pews.
- The offering will be collected in a single (stationary) location.
- Communion will be offered only in the form of bread. Each person will come forward while keeping their mask on, pick up a wafer from a table, take the wafer back to their seat and then consume.
- We have not yet concluded what to do about congregational singing and the choir.
- The sermon will be offered from a fixed location and readers will read from various separate locations.
- Even while returning to the sanctuary, we will continue offering worship via Facebook and YouTube.
- We will need help with running all the technology needed for the recording and streaming of worship.
- We will have fans for greater air circulation in the sanctuary – and may initially not have A/C given that the Cooling Tower is currently shut off.
- We will keep an attendance for in-person worship in case any contact tracing becomes necessary.
- Initially we will not gather for a coffee hour after worship, and the kitchen will be off-limits. We ask that only one person be in the bathroom areas at one time.
- We ask folks who are at risk to stay home; we ask folks who do not feel well to also stay at home.
- After Sunday worship the sanctuary will be thoroughly cleaned and will be closed to visitors until the following Sunday.

This and many other things are being diligently worked on. Please let us know how you are. I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you soon.

Blessings, *Mo. Carla*

Calling into zoom from a land line:

Sunday Worship

Dial +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

It will ask for a Meeting ID: 880 4535 2307 followed by the “#” pound/hashtag

It will ask for a Password: 470534 followed by the “#” pound/hashtag

SMST Squad

Dial +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

It will ask for a Meeting ID: 835 2205 3672 followed by the “#” pound/hashtag

It will ask for a Password: 032358 followed by the “#” pound/hashtag

Wednesday Bible Study

Dial +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

It will ask for a Meeting ID: 852 0999 4642 followed by the “#” pound/hashtag

It will ask for a Password: 706030 followed by the “#” pound/hashtag