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*Rector*

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June 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 been three months since we have worshipped together inside the sanctuary of St. Matthew & St. Timothy's. I continue to miss you all. You all have been ever present in my prayers and thoughts. For many of us the last month, since I last wrote, have been highly stressful, troubling, cathartic, and at times even joyous. Many emotions to hold together added to the anxious life under Covid19. Here in NYC today we are entering Phase II of reopening. Until July 1<sup>st</sup> we are not allowed to have public worship (our Bishop's directive); and there are legal limitations to gatherings, both indoor and outdoor.

As much as any planning can be done at this time, it is in September that I expect that we will 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.

Therefore, in this letter, I am announcing to the congregation that we will not be having in-person worship until at least Sunday, September 13, and only if at that time it is prudent and safe to do so. We will plan to gather in person on that day and celebrate Grandparents' Sunday and Back to School. When we return to in-person worship, we will continue to stream the services on Facebook and YouTube; and initially there will not be any coffee hour or access to the kitchen. This was not an easy decision, but we believe that it is the safest decision, especially since many in our community are over-65 years of age or have underlying conditions and should not be coming to church until we as a city, state, and nation, have a more comprehensive handle of the virus. 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.

As you may have read, Bp. Dietsche is allowing public worship to resume after July 1; the bishop also made it clear, that this is not a mandate to immediately offer in person worship. This decision is left to each congregation. As of this week, New York City is in Phase II of reopening, and we are legally bound to gatherings smaller than 10 persons. If current trends are predictive, in Phase III, Cuomo is permitting gatherings of 25 persons or less. Phase III will come sometime in July, and as a congregation we are larger than 25 persons. Again, we do not want folks to expose themselves to illness by coming to church, especially because of age, health, or by taking public transportation; especially, since initially when returning to church will not in essence include any substantial interaction between parishioners or with the clergy.

As we continue to offer virtual weekly worship and all our virtual weekly programming, the following changes are being made:

- Given our live-worship experience of God's Pride (June 13), beginning July 5, worship will be live, not pre-recorded (except for music), on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. on Zoom, and streamed on YouTube and Facebook. If you do not wish to be part of the service through Zoom, your experience need not change. But, you are now able to join through Zoom as well.
  - 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
  - The worship will remain uploaded to be watched at other times.
  - Instructions on how to call by zoom are at the bottom of this letter.
  - You can join the worship at any time during the Zoom call.
- 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.
  - Included with this letter please find a generic order of worship for the summer.
  - Also, the readings for Sunday, June 28.
- The Zoom Coffee Hour will be the same Zoom call as the worship – just not recorded or streamed.
- Our current weekly schedule is:
  - Mondays at 5:30 p.m. SMST Squad
  - We offer Bible Study on Wednesday evenings at 6:15 p.m. An opportunity for various conversations on Gender, Sexuality, Race, etc.
  - We continue to do Power of Prayer on Thursdays. 10 minutes of prayer at 10 a.m. live streamed on Facebook.
  - Faith conversations on Thursday via Zoom
  - SMST Pen Pals for Love
- 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 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.

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.*

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. We are actively working on securing:
  - Reliable food sourcing
  - Reliable PPE sourcing
  - A robust volunteer base
- The next planning meeting for the Soup Kitchen is Tuesday, June 30 at 5 p.m. – Using the Zoom SMST Squad log-in information.

### **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.

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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.
- 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 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