



Reverend Carla E. Roland Guzmán, PhD  
*Rector*

October 23, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to all of you and your loved ones in the name of God. It has been a challenging year for everyone in so many shared ways and in all our individual struggles. So much is hard, yet seeing many of you through Zoom, or at church on Sunday mornings is life giving, and gives us an important reminder on what matters most: our worship together of God and our living into our baptismal promises.

I am writing with some updates and information. It is hard to know how to measure Pandemic time. Counting started with days, that turned into weeks, that turned into months, and unfortunately, we will likely count at least one year. Church time, though, has its own rhythms, weekly, seasonal, programmatic, and administrative.

We are currently on the home stretch of ordinary time (the Season after Pentecost) and in a little more than a month we will be in a new liturgical year with the start of **Advent** on November 29<sup>th</sup>. With November around the corner, we get ready to celebrate **All Saints' Sunday** (Nov. 1) and the **Feast of All Souls** (Nov. 2)—we will combine both of these services on November 1 at 10 a.m., and take some intentional time to remember our loved ones who have died.

Next week, during the **SMST Squad** time we will begin a 4-session conversation on the book "**How to be a Antiracist**" by Ibram Kendi. The discussion will be on October 27, November 10, December 1, and December 15 (all gatherings at 5:30 on Zoom). We have an intergenerational **Bible Study** on Wednesdays at 6:15—during this time we look at the lectionary readings for the following Sunday. **Faith Conversations** continue Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. We are even beginning to plan a "**Welcome Home**" **Evangelism Event** for Fall 2021 – where are planning together is as important and transformative as we can envision the event itself being.

We are amid what would be **Stewardship Season**—when the church makes an appeal to each of you for a pledge for the next year. Your pledge cards are what help us plan, approve, and present the budget for the following year. To be honest, by the end of 2020, we may be \$150,000 behind on income, an amount that makes the PPP loan we received so important. We are 32% behind on pledges as compared to last year; and 50% less as compared to what was pledged. We have cut spending in every way possible; yet, we still have fixed expenses and there have been some increased expenses for items related to health and safety.

One thing that this pandemic has shown is that we depend on all the pledges, regardless of amount; all pledges help the cash flow of the church. We need your contributions, and we ask that you continue your offerings, and if you can catch up on your pledge for 2020, we greatly appreciate it. We ask that you make a

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pledge to the church for 2021, for an amount that is manageable for you and your own circumstance, remembering that we depend on your offerings and pledges for our worship and many of our programs, including funds for the Sunday Meals Program.

You will receive a phone call or more information soon about pledges for 2021.

The vestry will meet on November 10 for the **Budget Approval**, and the budget will be presented to the congregation in an adapted version of the **Annual Meeting** on Sunday, November 15 during the 10 a.m. worship service.

To summarize:

- Starting October 27 – Book conversation
- November 1 – Worship at 10 a.m. with renewal of Baptismal Vows, the litany of healing, and the remembering of the faithfully departed.
- November 8 – Submit in writing or by email a preliminary 2021 pledge to Mo. Carla. 2020 statements will be mailed as soon as possible.
- November 10 – Vestry meeting and Budget approval
- November 15 – Annual Meeting during the worship service
- November 29 – First Sunday of Advent

We continue to invite folks to come back to church, also asking that if you are vulnerable to Covid19 or do not feel well to stay at home. We are doing everything possible to keep folks safe in-person; please also do your part to stay safe.

Our regular programming is:

- Sundays at 10 a.m. Worship in-person and online
- Sundays at 2 p.m. Sunday Meals Program (Cooking Team 10:30-1:30; Distribution Team 1:30-3 p.m.) – in-person. The meal is to go.
- Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. SMST SQUAD (online)
- Wednesdays at 6:15 p.m. For the Bible Tells Me So – Intergenerational Bible Study and Conversation (online)
- Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. – Faith Conversations (online)

Although we have in-person worship, we will not offer coffee hour in-person, only through Zoom after the service – we may not offer in-person coffee hour until the spring, and may do so in the backyard for better ventilation and social distancing.

Also, remember that ventilation is very important, and we are keeping doors open and fans on in the church; dress accordingly.

As a reminder,

- Worship is available in-person, through Zoom, Facebook, or YouTube at 10 am
  - On our Facebook Page SMSTChurch [www.facebook.com/smstchurch/live](http://www.facebook.com/smstchurch/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
    - 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.
  - On YouTube and Facebook worship remains uploaded to be watched at other times.

- Coffee Hour follows **immediately** after the service on Zoom (same log-in information as worship).
- With hybrid worship, the format is changing to a more familiar Eucharistic format. 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.
- Are you getting the weekly e-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.
- 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.

Even as some of us will have communion in person, we continue to Feast on the Word of God. As I shared in previous letters, 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.*

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**

- Resumed August 30
- There are safety protocols for all volunteers, guests, and staff. These include temperature checks for volunteers and sign-ins for contact tracing
- Volunteers are needed to help prepare and package hot meals for distribution by a separate team. This will help our amazing Captains, Monique and Maurece have a more manageable schedule.

### **Other programs/tenants/persons entering the building**

- We will require all that enter our facilities to wear masks.
- Folks entering the building need to sign-in and get temperature checks.
- 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. 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.
- 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 streaming worship via Facebook and YouTube.
- We will need help with running all the technology needed for streaming.
- We will have fans for greater air circulation in the sanctuary. We will keep the backyard door open.
- 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