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Rector

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God's peace and grace be with you and your loved ones always. As I write this letter it has been nine months since our common lives were changed by the Covid19 pandemic. Much has happened since, at SMST, in our neighborhood and city, around the US and the world. We are ever mindful of the ailments of our society, inequities in health care, and systemic racism; yet, we are also mindful of the good things, of our support and prayer for one another, for kindness to neighbor and stranger alike, for resilience 55 years ago after the fire and today, for our worship together in person and online, and the incredible commitment and leadership from the parishioners, staff, vestry, and wardens of the church. In this season of expectation and hope, I am deeply grateful for all of you and you are all in my prayers.

On Sunday, we will hear the word of God reminding us of the annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel.

The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

From this passage and the season, I want to remind all a few things. First, our common lives may have been greatly changed by the Covid19 pandemic, yet the world was radically changed by Jesus two millennia ago, we were radically changed in baptism, and we continue to be profoundly changed whenever we gather for worship and in sharing communion when we are together.

Second, this is a season of expectation, yet it is also a season to again say yes to God as Mary did: *"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."*

And finally, God also works through each person to solve the problems of the world, large and small. God has given us immense capacities and agency to deal with much that comes our way, as the Angel told Mary and reminds us: *"For nothing will be impossible with God."* Remember God works through you all the time – it is up to you to discern the calling and respond to it. Who is God calling you to be and do in this season of your life?

In November, at the annual meeting and in the annual report, I set out a series of criteria that would trigger the closing of the church for in-person worship. The positivity rate in NYC is currently over 6%, although in Manhattan it is still under 3%. Once Manhattan hits 3% we will close to in-person worship, until we are again in a pattern of sustained positivity rate decrease and in consultation with the vestry. Regardless, sadly, our Christmas Eve Service will only be online. For all other activities in the church facilities, we will follow whatever legal requirements are in effect. As an essential service

the Sunday Meals Program will continue. The priority is for everyone to stay safe and minimize risk as we wait for the full vaccine roll out. Let us know if there is any way we may be of service.

It is always great to see you, whether in person or online. It is my hope to see as many folks as possible in our online programming, which includes:

NOTE: the numbers in parenthesis are the zoom meeting ID and password.

Sunday Worship at 10 a.m. available via Zoom (880 4535 2307, 470534), Facebook (@SMSTChurch), or YouTube. On First Sundays we include the Litany of Healing. The service is immediately followed by a Zoom Coffee Hour with the same log-in information. If you have all of the APPS installed on a phone or tablet, use the church's website which includes all appropriate links (smstchurch.org). If you don't receive our weekly emails, please send an email to Mo. Carla at rector@smstchurch.org in order to begin receiving these.

SMST Squad gatherings for special programs or projects on Zoom (835 2205 3672, 032358).

Weekly **Bible Study** on Wednesdays on Zoom - Resumes the week of January 10th. (852 0999 4642, 706030)

Weekly **Faith and Evangelism Conversations** on Thursdays on Zoom (858 0991 3483, 006511)

Special holiday programs:

Visit with Santa at SMST on Zoom, Tuesday, December 22 at 5:30 p.m. (868 7609 5970, 996113)

Christmas Eve Service on Thursday, December 24 at 7 p.m. on Zoom (880 4535 2307, 470534), Facebook (@SMSTChurch), and YouTube.

Christmas-Epiphany Pageant Reading on Wednesday, January 6 at 6 p.m. on Zoom (836 3689 2336, 248330), Facebook (@SMSTChurch), and YouTube.

Please note that the church office and facilities will be closed December 24-27, December 31-January 3. There will be limited office hours on December 21-23 and 28-30. Hilda will be working regular hours on December 21-23 and 28-30.

Wising everyone a joyous Christmas and Blessed New Year!

In Christ, *Mo. Carla*

