

Re-Opening Task Force Update #5

Friends,

The Reopening Task Force met again on Monday night, October 26th after the October 21st release from Governor Cooper. Three weeks ago when we met, we did not anticipate that Coronavirus case numbers would be on the rise again. The national death toll has surpassed 226,000 persons, the state death toll is above 4,300, and the beginning of flu season is upon us. These facts caused our discussions to be solemn. As stated from the beginning, we have planned to return to worship during Phase 3 of our state's plan when it is safe for our members, staff and visitors. We view our primary responsibility as preparing for our safe return. We all agreed that one Coronavirus infection originating from within our congregation is one too many.

We held a Task Force led Town Hall meeting on Wednesday evening, October 28th via Zoom to hear what the membership had to say. A video of that gathering is available for viewing and a link was provided in Church Chat the day after it was held. We are grateful for the participation, the spirit and the support we received. After discussion from those comments, the Task Force unanimously agreed to continue **outside worship (with live-streaming for virtual participation) in the parking lot of the church at 11:00 a.m. as long as weather permits**. The following protocols will continue to be in place:

- All worshippers will accept personal responsibility for symptom monitoring. If you have a fever, cough or shortness of breath, please do not come to the church.
- Face masks are mandatory, even during outside worship.
- You may remain in your car or you may bring lawn chairs and sit at your car during the worship service.
- Abide by the parking attendants' directions to socially distance by using every other parking space.
- If you are among the higher risk population due to age and/or underlying medical conditions, you bear the greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19. We will continue to provide virtual worship opportunities for those who do not feel comfortable with in-person worship.
- The Task Force agreed that one infection of COVID-19 among attendees will result in the church's return to virtual worship.

Small group meetings at the church will continue to be prohibited. This decision was made and communicated in our last update and was upheld by the Task Force after the Town Hall gathering. To reiterate, the Department of Health and Human Services' guidance on this topic is as follows: *"Gatherings such as religious classes, youth events, support groups, or other programming should be held virtually to ensure social distancing."* **The Task Force is not comfortable extending access to any small groups at the present time.** This includes committees on the Administrative Council and those that report to Council on Ministries. We continue to advocate for virtual meetings using platforms such as Zoom or Google Hangouts, and we suggest the traditional use of telephone conferencing.

Advent Season Announcement: After extensive discussions in our last two meetings, the Task Force unanimously agreed to place a moratorium on in-person worship discussions until mid-January. This will allow our worship leaders to concentrate on worship content and to bring some of our traditional Advent experiences in a different format that honors the flavor of the season while continuing to keep all of our members, visitors and staff safe. **The Advent season is not cancelled at Saint Andrews!** Yes, it will look and feel different, and we hope each of you will participate in the celebrations of the season. We will update the congregation on Advent experiences as soon as staff, worship leaders and committees have them finalized.

We will revisit the in-person worship decision in January once we have had an opportunity to assess new information. Again, we are grateful for the feedback we received from the participants of the Town Hall gathering.

We continue to covet your prayers and pray for your acceptance of responsibility to prevent the spread of this virus in the simplest, most loving way possible. Wear a mask to protect others should you be a carrier without symptoms or knowledge; maintain social distance at six feet apart; wash your hands frequently using soap and water for 20 seconds.

Please know that we continue to work toward our preferred future by making the best decisions for all, one step at a time. If you would like more information, we encourage you to email one of the members of this Task Force (listed below).

Lisa Anthony: laanthonycpa@gmail.com
Parker Watson: parker_watson@yahoo.com
Cathy Olsen: spungrmom@gmail.com
Merlin Young: merlinyoung@mindspring.com
Claude Jenkins: howard49jenkins@gmail.com
Lisa Jones: lisalj@nc.rr.com
Iris Senzig: irissenzig@gmail.com
Stacey Thomas: stacey.jo.69@gmail.com
Sarah Cope: scope@mojonc.com
Doug Harwood: dougyg@gmail.com
Sarah Carey: sarahgoodwincarey@gmail.com
Evelyn Tay: evelyntayhp@gmail.com
Ardys Sandell: agsandell1706@gmail.com