

Observations on Resuming In-Person Worship (8/6/20)

I. Things you may wish to do

Preparation

- "Soft" re-gathering in both churches was very helpful. Vestry, significant others, and a few randomly invited people attended HEII service so we could pinpoint problems and make any needed adjustments (logistically and liturgically).
- Usher training is essential. Must be able to be firm (e.g., "No mask, no entry; "no, you can't sit next to your friend," etc.")
- Start amassing cleaning materials well before re-gathering.
- Get estimates ahead of time for cost to sanitize church or meeting space.
- Remember (if there is still a limit on the number of people allowed) to set aside seats for unexpected drop-ins.
- It seems better to put tape on the tops of pews, ask people to only sit in front of the taped areas, and let them choose their spot than to have ushers direct people to where the ushers think they should sit. More respectful of their autonomy.
- Putting cleaning materials in restrooms and having instructions taped to the wall listing what to wipe (handles, faucets, towel bar, etc.) doesn't guarantee people will do it.
- Have masks available for anyone who shows up without one. (no one showed up without one, but a few traded their homemade bandana ones for our cloth masks)
- Signup Genius has been a very effective way to make reservations for the two services. Phone calls to people not on social media have also been useful in registering participants.

Communication

- We have publicized the plan approved by the bishop in the church's website; the same information is printed in the PDF of the service leaflet. These have also been mailed to everyone in the parish mailing list, along with the announcement of the new rector's arrival.
- Let people know what to expect in advance. For example:
[Christ Church, Ridley Park](#)
[Holy Apostles, Penn Wynne](#)
- Strongly and repeatedly encourage anyone who has been sick to not come to church for a least a week after their symptoms have abated.
- Post links to your streamed worship on your website and Facebook page
- Repeat the safety protocols every Sunday service, particularly the 'no singing' one. We have a cantor (at a distance) and I announce that the cantor is singing on our behalf.

Worship

- Asked people not to consume the bread until they are on their way back to or have reached their seat.
- At Communion - start with people who are sitting in the back and work forward instead of the more traditional "front goes first." Doing this eliminates people

who are trying to get back to their seats from bumping into others who are standing and waiting to come forward.

- Some churches are using tongs to distribute the host
- Some clergy use a face shield instead of a mask for preaching and the prayer of consecration.
- To help discourage singing I have reduced some of the usual sung parts to spoken during the liturgy, for example we used to sing the Lord's Prayer - that is now spoken

II. Things you may wish to avoid

- Running AC *and* having windows open for air circulation unduly stresses the AC system in a church (at least, in smaller churches with smaller HVAC systems).

III. Other Observations

- Pushback on no singing is never-ending. Every single week.
- Some people will show up without having read a single thing they've been sent (whether via email or snail mail, doesn't matter; they don't open either) and will be amazed/appalled at "no singing," "no sitting with your friends," etc. Ushers need to be able to deal with that on the spot.
- Many churches are seeing smaller than expected in-person attendance
- So far, the feedback has been that they "feel safe" coming to church because of the safety protocols.
- We continue to offer the Daily Office on our Facebook page and Livestream the two services on Sunday. Virtual coffee hour follows the second service at 11:00am. We have a new website where we will begin to post the recorded Sunday Eucharists.
- Don't be afraid to make adjustments in your practices based on how things go. For example, one church cancelled its planned mid-week eucharist due to low attendance. Another moved all services outside.