

Dear Emmanuel Family,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying our warming days, the blooming flowers, the greening trees, and the singing of birds announcing the arrival of spring.

I am thrilled to pass along some details for our regathering for worship. The Vestry has commissioned a Regathering Committee to think through these details and develop a plan to allow us to worship together safely. Jim Lott, who serves as the chair of our Worship Commission, is chairing this Regathering Committee and has already met with several persons who have key roles in our worship. The details in this letter are the result of that first meeting.

We want to say first that the “return to normal” is a process, and no one knows for certain how long this will take. For now, I want to describe the first phase of this process. As time goes on, we will modify our procedures to suit changing circumstances. Our ultimate goal is, of course, to return to “full normal”: worship as it was before the pandemic.

- We will open our beloved sanctuary for worship on Sunday, May 23...Pentecost Sunday!
- This service will be Rite 2 at 10:30am. Although it will be an in-person worship, the service will also be live-streamed. Please know that we are committed to continue live streaming our worship services even after all Covid restrictions are lifted. Technology has given us a new way to spread the Good News of God’s love, and we want to continue to use that gift.
- It is important that you remember that masks and distancing will be mandatory at all times while inside the building...except for the few moments when you are taking Communion.
- We will not require any sign-up or pre-registration, but we will need everyone to sign-in upon entering the sanctuary. The ushers will have a list of members of Emmanuel to facilitate the process, and visitors’ names will be added to that list each Sunday. The sign-in table will be just outside the double “inside” doors between the narthex and the sanctuary.
- When the weather is agreeable, we will use the main entrance as is our custom. When the weather is not so agreeable, we will use the West entrance of the Narthex, the covered door on Frederick Street. This will allow you to enter the building more quickly and then line up in the corridor, properly distanced, before entering the sanctuary. Persons who need the elevator will enter the Dining Room entrance and be assisted by ushers to enter the sanctuary for signing-in.
- The pews will be clearly marked, showing which spaces are open for seating. The available seating will safely accommodate 28 units of up to 5 family members. Our ushers will help with seating as needed.
- For now, there will be no congregational singing in the building. Sarah and the selected soloists will provide the music for worship.

- We will use the Prayer Books to avoid printing the entire service. The Lectionary Readings will be printed out and inserted into the bulletin as usual. The program will also be available online for the live-streamed service, as well as for anyone who prefers to access it while worshipping in person.
- Denise and Susan will administer the consecrated wafer from the front, just below the chancel steps; there will be no wine for now. There will be hand sanitizer on a table for your use before receiving the wafer.
- When it is time to receive Communion, the ushers will direct us as we line up and move forward down the middle aisle and return to our pew by the outer aisles.
- At the end of the service, the ushers will dismiss us by pews. We will be asked to wait to greet one another and visit until we are outside the church.

I want to say again that our goal is to return to normal, safely and confidently. For now, however, we want to do all we can to help you feel safe, to observe the necessary protocols, and to be clear what will happen as we regather.

Several volunteers will be needed to make this happen smoothly, to help with such things as entering and exiting the building, signing-in, and assisting the audio-visual crew. If you are willing and available to volunteer, please contact me or someone on the Vestry or the church office. Over the next few weeks, you may receive a call asking for your help. Please give prayerful attention to what you can do to help us successfully return to in-person Eucharist.

Before I close, let me remind us that Pentecost is traditionally celebrated as the birthday of the Church. Christ was crucified, rose again, spent many days with his disciples, then ascended into Heaven. Acts 2, picking up the narrative we read at the end of Luke's Gospel, describes the startling coming of the Holy Spirit, descending on several disciples who had gathered to celebrate Pentecost.

Pentecost Sunday, then, is a wonderful symbol of birth and renewal. What a day for us to gather again to worship in our Emmanuel sanctuary.

Over the next several weeks, please join me in praying for clarity, for patience, and for discernment as we find our way forward.

I look forward to seeing you on May 23rd...whether you choose to join us for in-person worship or choose to join us virtually. Please let me know what concerns you might have and what questions you need answered as you choose.

Blessings to each of you.



Steve Berneking, Ph.D.
Senior Warden