

5/21/2020

Feast of the Ascension

Dear friends,

Greetings on the Feast of the Ascension! Yesterday, our Governor made an announcement moving congregational “reopening” to today, with a limit of ten people, and masked while observing physical distancing. The truth is that we are not prepared to regather right now. As Jesus reminded the disciples before ascending, let us “stay here” (Luke 24:49) in place until we have more direction. Therefore, we will continue the way we are through June as we prepare to regather.

As promised, I have appointed a competent Thriving in the COVID World Task Force to help us thoughtfully navigate this new normal over the immediate future and the next few years. It will work as three groups with one purpose of advising and helping us. Here’s my charter/request to the Task Force.

1. To help us continue our common life and regather in the COVID world slowly, safely and thoughtfully.
2. To help nurture and sustain our common liturgical and sacrament life in this new world.
3. To help nurture and sustain the relational oneness and health of our Diocese and strategically reimagine the church over the next two years.

The first two groups are already meeting, and next week will provide guidelines that are best suited for our region.

At that point, we will invite every vestry to appropriate the guidelines and share their re-gathering plan with the Task Force for their wisdom and affirmation. This is not a permission seeking process, but a way to affirm and tweak local wisdom and discernment out of an abundance of caution. The primary purpose is to move forward slowly, safely and thoughtfully as a diocese given our local contexts and conscious of what we do know about this virus. We know that one size does not fit all, and that the virus is the same.

Here’s the clarity we have gleaned from the wisdom of leaders across sectors at this moment in time.

- We are in this for the long haul, for a viable vaccine and herd immunity. Spiritually, we also want to birth a new church that is more truly inclusive, accessible, just, generous, and marinated in God's word.
- We are postured to continue online worship at least until June 30<sup>th</sup> and beyond. We will keep evaluating this timeline and adjust accordingly based on how prepared we can be. We will have some guidance on how to record/lead our worship safely from our sanctuaries in the meantime.
- Our current new normal still is:
  - stay in place when possible
  - wash your hands with soap
  - physical distancing and wearing a mask when out in public
- We will un-pause thoughtfully, slowly, and differently from the way we shut down in March
- We will come through this with greater appreciation for a simpler way of life together

If we are to be successful, we must continue to take personal responsibility seriously. We will be able to say more about in-person gatherings and worship once the task force has appraised our contexts based

on changing realities. The good news is that we don't have to reinvent the wheel since there is much wisdom from around the church on these matters already.

Your diocesan task force and I will work faithfully to discern where, on our own unfolding timeline, it might be safe to hold services of Holy Eucharist again and how. Until then, let us continue to respond to the hard reality of this pandemic with the same trust, creativity, and steadfastness that have defined our work and worship together in the past weeks.

Kindly join me in welcoming the members of the Thriving in the COVID World Task Force! They are already meeting to organize themselves. You will learn more about the members and the gifts they bring. They will avail of the expertise of the Diocesan Human Resources Committee, and our Diocesan Chancellor/Assistant Chancellors as needed. We will also update you with reports regularly. Please pray for these leaders as they generously offer their services as experienced leaders in various fields with a desire to help us journey safely together as a Diocese.

With Affection,



Prince G. Singh

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Thriving in the COVID World Task Force

Josh Barrett	Deacon, recent graduate from Seminary
Jay Burkardt	Assistant Rector, St. Paul's, Rochester
Drew Guild	Warden, St John's, Catharine
Rick Hamlin	Covenanted Substitute Priest
Carl D'Angio	MD, Search Chair & former Warden, St. Peter's, Henrietta
Cameron Miller	Rector, Trinity, Geneva
Keisha Stokes	Transitional Deacon, recent graduate from Seminary
Dan Burner	Rector, St. Marks, Penn Yan, SE District Dean
Billy Daniel	Rector, St. Michael's, Geneseo, Diocesan Dean for formation and liturgy
Floyd Bayley	Cochair: Diocesan Council, Racial Reconciliation, Healing & Justice
Nita Byrd	Chaplain/Dean for Spiritual Engagement, Hobart and William Smith
Julie Syracuse	Warden, St. John's, Sodus; Vice Chair, Diocesan Council
Liz Salamone	Director of Children's Education, Christ Church, Pittsford
Steve Robb	MD, and Deacon
Joan Phillips	Senior Warden, St. Peter's, Henrietta
Max Whelan	MD, St. Peter's, Geneva
Amanda Dwyer	Attorney, Harris Beach PLLC and Vestry, Christ Church Pittsford
Jeremy Cooney	Attorney, Vestry, Christ Church Rochester & Candidate for NYS Senate

Diocesan Staff Support

Carolyn McConnell	Executive Assistant to the Bishop
Todd Rubiano	Chief Financial Officer
Kristy Estey	Diocesan Operations and Benefits Manager
Steve Richards	Communications

