

# Our return to in-person worship on May 9 - updated guidelines

May 4, 2021

Dear Atonement Friends,

Our return to in-person worship, with appropriate precautions, will be on **Sunday, May 9 – the Sixth Sunday of Easter and Mother’s Day, at 9:55 a.m.**

It’s been a long time since we’ve been able to worship God together in person. Our last in-person Eucharist was in November. Beginning in December and through the holiday seasons, COVID 19 cases in our state and in New Jersey skyrocketed, and remained in the “very high risk” level (“red”). During this time, I’ve enjoyed seeing and praying with many of you on Zoom and Facebook Live, in Private Communion, and through worship videos.

I know that some of us don’t feel ready yet to venture out to church. And there are some who are more than ready. We give thanks for the increased numbers of fully vaccinated members and neighbors. As of the writing of this letter, Bergen County has shifted down one level to “high risk” (“orange”), and numbers continue to track downward, for which we thank God.

After consulting with the Vestry and the Worship Team, I believe that it’s right for us to return to worshipping together at Atonement. As we gather, we will again be following the Bishop’s directives concerning safety protocols. In order that you will know what steps you will need to take to participate, and what to expect at services, please read this entire email. We also want you to know that we will continue to stream and record our services -- so that anyone who doesn’t yet feel comfortable returning to church in person will be able to participate. You can always participate remotely “live” at: [www.facebook.com/thechurchoftheatonement](https://www.facebook.com/thechurchoftheatonement)

Despite all that has happened, I trust that you remain confident of God’s grace and love for you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the wardens or me.

Faithfully,

Lynne+

### **Prior to the service:**

- To ensure social distancing, we must limit the number of people who can attend to 35% capacity. Consequently, you will need to contact the office no later than Thursday at 3:00 pm each week to register for the next Sunday service. Please provide your name and contact information and the name and contact information of family members attending with you.
- If we reach capacity for the service before you can register, we will advise you and ask if you would like to be informed about a possible second service in the evening. (After polling those who've attended the Sunday 8:00 a.m. service, we have decided not to resume that service *until the fall*.)
- If you fail to register in advance, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to admit you to the service because we may be at capacity. If we are not at capacity, we will gladly welcome you. You will need to give the usher your name and contact information.
- Prior to the service you will receive a bulletin by email. If you are able, follow the bulletin/order of service on your own electronic device. Or print out and bring it with you to the service. A few printed copies will be available for any visitors. Please take any paper bulletins home with you after the service.
- If you are going to need handicap access, please advise us when you register.
- Please do not attend the service if you have any of these COVID-19 symptoms: chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

### **At the service:**

- **Please arrive by 9:45 a.m.** so that everyone who has registered is able to be seen by the ushers, and then seated in time to prepare for worship which will begin with the prelude at about **9:55 a.m.**
- An usher will be at the door of the church to ensure that everyone can maintain social distancing entering the service.

- An usher will take everyone's temperature using a contactless thermometer. No one will be admitted to the service with a fever (temperature above 100.4 F).
- An usher will be in the church and will show people to their seat. The pews are marked for 6-foot distances and there will be two empty pews between occupied pews. People who live together may sit together.
- The service of Holy Eucharist will be abbreviated to approximately 50 minutes in length.
- When Holy Communion is distributed an usher will release people by pews so that distancing is maintained. Communion will be received only in the form of the wafer at the rail. As always, you may choose not to receive Communion.
- When the service is completed the usher will guide everyone to exit the church one row at a time starting with the back row.
- If you need to leave your seat during the service for any reason, please make sure you go directly out the rear exit of the church and re-enter using the same doors.
- You must wear a mask throughout the service. If you do not have one, one will be provided to you. Remove your mask briefly at the altar rail to receive Communion. Those leading worship will also be wearing masks.
- At this time, neither the congregation nor the choir may sing out loud. There will be music, however, i.e. a prelude and postlude, a chanted psalm and/or a solo. We invite you to follow the words of the hymns in the bulletin, and whisper or sing very softly "sotto voce" – "under the breath" only. Or simply read the words and enjoy the music.
- There will be no hymnals or prayer books in the pews. Feel free to bring your own copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*. However, the entire service will be printed in the bulletin.
- Social distancing will be maintained at the Peace.
- The restrooms will be available for use, one person at a time except for members of the same family. In addition to washing hands, please wipe every surface touched with an alcohol wipe, which will be provided, including the doorknob.
- The water cooler will not be available. Feel free to bring your own water.

- There will be no coffee hour, but you may bring your own beverage to enjoy outside with others, while maintaining a six-foot distance from non-family members. However, please do not gather with others unless you can maintain social distancing.

Please remember:

- Follow the guidance of the ushers.
- When you're in church, and if you receive Communion, it's likely that you will be visible briefly while the service is being live-streamed, and in the recorded service.
- Pay attention to all signs.
- **While every effort will be made to keep people safe, there is no way to eliminate the risk of infection.**
- If you are tested positive for COVID-19 within 14 days after attending a service, please contact the parish office immediately.
- Registering for one Sunday service does not automatically register you for future ones.
- Communion will be made available once a month to those unable to come to church.
- If viral numbers descend into the "yellow level" in coming months, some relaxing of guidelines may occur. We will notify everyone if that happens.
- We expect to hold summer services in the a/c chapel on Sundays at 9 am, as in the past.