



CHRIST CHURCH

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The Rev. Matthew Hoxsie Mead, Rector

June 8, 2020

TASK FORCE ON REOPENING CHRIST CHURCH'S BUILDINGS

Dear Friends in Christ,

Our buildings were closed, and public worship was suspended by the Bishop of New York on March 16. The Bishop's most recent directive sets July 1 as the soonest date for any public worship and notes that "resumption of public worship on July 1 is permitted, but not required."

<https://2020.dioceseny.org/covid-19-update/bishop-issues-guidance-on-re-opening/>

I have formed a *Task Force on Reopening Christ Church's Buildings*. The Task Force has two goals. The first is to produce "Guidelines for Reopening Christ Church" and publish it on June 30. These guidelines will be updated as needed as we move towards the autumn. Our second goal is to reopen the church building safely for prayer on July 1.

The Task Force is comprised of clergy, wardens, physicians, first responders, lawyers, musicians, government workers, parents with young children, seniors, and vestry members. We have five working subcommittees:

- 1) Denominational, Ecumenical & Interfaith – What does our Bishop require to open and resume worship? What are other local houses of worship / regional denominations doing?
- 2) Medical – What protocols for public health must we follow to reopen and worship together?
- 3) Sacred Space & Program Space – How many people we can safely fit with proper social distancing in our different spaces; determine traffic flow, seating possibilities, ushering / host responsibilities, indoor/outdoor options; enable livestreaming of worship; explore use of other spaces (hall, library, outdoors, undercroft) for in-person worship, Sunday School, and/or closed circuit streaming; explore reopening of program/tenant spaces.
- 4) Procurement of Supplies – order necessary supplies (masks, hand sanitizer, tape, signs, etc.)
- 5) Secretarial / Documents – Compile a list of open questions; keep and circulate notes; Draft "Guidelines for Reopening Christ Church" for website/publication.

Until last week, the State of New York had allowed no more than 10 people for any worship service, but that has now been increased to 25% capacity when a given region/county reaches *Reopening Phase 2* -- Westchester County is scheduled to begin *Phase 2* on June 9 (tomorrow). Our church building capacity is 208 people, so 25% is 52 people. The Bishop has mandated "initially, no differing allowances for indoor and outdoor services", so we are maxed out at 52 people, for the time being.

I cannot yet say exactly when or in what form public worship services will resume. Each week brings new information which makes it difficult to determine what will happen next month. I can say, we do want to resume public worship in a safe way. Our church sanctuary's layout and size complicate many of the things we take for granted in worship when we are living in one of the epicenters of a pandemic. The diversity (age and geography) of our nearly 600 members complicates things further. I think it is safe to assume worship will include strict adherence to the allowed number of worshippers, mandatory masks for all, preset seating to ensure social distancing by household, mandatory hand sanitizer upon entering and immediately before communion, music of some sort but likely no congregational singing, shorter worship services to reduce possible exposure, no shared books or leaflets, and extensive cleaning before and after worship. It will probably feel weird. There will certainly be questions about what is or is not necessary. No matter how it looks or feels, it will be better than no in-person worship at all.

Our Task Force is working on all of this right now. Please keep us in your prayers, and reach out to any of the members (listed below) if you have any questions or concerns. We plan to publish "Guidelines for Reopening Christ Church" on June 30, and we plan to reopen the church for prayer on July 1. At the end of June I will write to let you all know exactly when and in what form public worship services will resume.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns about any of this or if you have any pastoral concerns. Beyond that I am happy and able to meet and pray with individuals outdoors in the Garden of Resurrection – just make an appointment directly with me and wear a mask when you come. You all remain in my prayers. God bless you; if you need anything please don't hesitate to call. My cell is 914-471-0260.

Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Hoxsie Mead". The signature is fluid and cursive, enclosed within a simple oval border.

The Reverend Matthew Hoxsie Mead, Rector

Task Force Members: Claire Allen, Russ Avolio, Angela Lore Barone, Kari Black, Jeff Bodenmann, Charlene Claxton, Andy Des Rault, John Fox, Etta Gumbs, Susan Harriss, Jeffrey Hoffman, Carol Ipsen, Toni Kavanaugh, Gavin Leckie, Matthew Mead, Martin Nash, Eileen Peluso, Betsy Kaufmann, Colette Phipps, Julie Sanabria, Jim Young, Barbara Zambelli.