



St. John's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
400 Humphrey St.
New Haven, CT 06511

November 11, 2020

**“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We are writing this letter to update you on our plans for worship and other gatherings at St. John's. Last night the COVID 19 Advisory Team met to discuss the alarming rise of infections in our region. New Haven is now listed as one of the Red Zone cities in our state.

Our committee members, comprised of the clergy (Revs. Chuck and Ellendale), both wardens (John Hare and Karen Mahan), our Pastoral Associate (Paul Smith) and other lay leaders (Justina Sullivan, David Baugham), along with our seminarian (Joe Rose) have been meeting every two weeks for months, prayerfully seeking God for wisdom as we maintain a strong parish community while keeping safe protocols for our worship. Others who have served on this committee are Lize Bickley and Andy Stransky.

Attached is a [letter from our bishops](#), which arrived last week. Due to the alarming rise in cases in our state, the bishops are strongly advising all parishes to return to online worship only. The governor of Connecticut has reinstated guidelines for in person gatherings, especially those living in Red Zone cities. **The COVID committee will follow these guidelines, and move our services back to an exclusive online platform beginning this Sunday, November 15th.** Our vote to return to online worship only was unanimous and for an indefinite period of time. Our committee will continue to meet and monitor the situation, returning to in person worship only when it is safe to do so.

At St. John's, we have been on a journey – which continues to this day.



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Once we moved to the Zoom platform for Palm Sunday, we learned that we could both remain connected virtually and follow the guidelines of state, local and ecclesiastical authorities to shelter in place.

Slowly, as the rates of infection decreased in our region, we began to gather in person on the church grounds. A group of creative, committed young people led the way, and formed a worshipping community in the churchyard during the summer months. With a large flat screen television outside, our Zoom services became hybrid – both in person and online. We blessed a Pollinator Garden and had a Blessing of the Animals in our churchyard.

In August, we began live streaming the service from the church and slowly moved our congregation inside the building, first with a Liturgy of the Word service, and next with Holy Eucharist. We are grateful to God to those who have worked so tirelessly to ensure the safety of our in person gatherings. However, in recent weeks, we see that things have changed, and we are likely in the pandemic second wave, expected by health officials.

The good news for us a parish community is that we have made this journey before - from in person to virtual. And, we will make it back again. Although it has not always been easy, or even completely satisfying, we as a parish community have remained connected to one another while being physically distanced.

Through our virtual worship, attendance at St. John's has grown. We now have people worshipping with us from other states and continents. Ministries and programs have continued. Though our buildings will be closed for now, the parish of St. John's is not closed. We are open and continuing in ministry for the sake of God's Kingdom.

There is great hope for us all with the news that a vaccine is on the way. However, our greatest hope is in God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

While the building is closed, we are doing exciting work inside. It will be ready for us to return. A committed parishioner has researched state grants for an energy



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audit which will upgrade our building in some major ways, including HVAC, insulation, nursery upgrades and air conditioning for our church services. Stay tuned for more information about this. Another committed group is working on decorative upgrades to the kitchen and parish hall. These are signs of hope for our future!

This Sunday, we offer to God the fruit of our hands – our pledges for the coming year and the work of parish artists. November 15, is our ‘In-Gathering Sunday’, the time when we receive pledges for the coming year. Pledge cards are available in digital form. Please be generous. Your faithfulness and generosity have allowed St. John’s to stay strong in the midst of this challenging time. After the service, the Racial Justice Fellowship will offer a Mural Presentation, artwork offered to God as a witness of racial healing.

In closing, we want to thank each one of you – for your faith and witness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is what holds us together in unity and will continue to do so. We will come out stronger on the other side of this – unified by our faith in Jesus. As we continue to gather online, we have hope for our future, and gratitude for the life we share together in Christ.

Faithfully,

The Rev. Canon Ellendale M. Hoffman, D.Min.

The Rev. Charles L. Hoffman, D.Min.

Missional Priests in Charge