

We isolate now
So when we gather again
No one is missing
(A pandemic Haiku)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body,
though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.....
If one member suffers, all suffer together with it;
if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
(1 Corinthians 12:12, 26-27)

Dear Trinitarians:

March 11, 2021

As Trinitarians we are one body in Christ, and many in the body have been wondering lately when we can be together again, in person, for worship and fellowship. This letter is intended as an update of where we've been, our current thinking, and what we have yet to determine.

Where We've Been

For the past year the Trinity Re-Entry Team has met regularly to monitor and review state, county, CDC, and diocesan recommendations for in-person worship, in addition to the most up-to-date numerical data on infection and hospitalization rates. The Trinity Re-Entry Team reports to the Vestry and has communicated to the parish this past year via the Thursday Update and snail mail.

Where We Are

Because COVID positivity rates have been falling across the state, the Episcopal Church in Minnesota (referred to here as the "diocese") has recently given congregations the option to begin considering, and planning for, more in-person gatherings while still observing a lengthy list of safety protocol, including (but not limited to): social distancing, capacity limits, and sanitizing surfaces.

If you would like a more thorough look at what is being required by the diocese for parishes moving toward re-entry: <https://episcopalmn.org/covid19-response>

Moving Forward: A Complex and Multi-Piece Puzzle

While we plan for, and anticipate, re-entry it's a value of our faith community to make sure worship continues to be available to all members of the body. Trinity has identified the basic COVID re-entry requirements mentioned above and we are optimistic about being able to meet them. However, Trinity faces some challenges on the path toward in-person worship.

- 1) Trinity's main sanctuary, lower-level classrooms, and nursery lack ventilation systems to circulate and purify air.
- 2) While many in our parish and staff are vaccinated (or soon to be), many likely will not be until summer, including key worship leaders, plus our Rector and Parish Administrator.
- 3) Those parts of the body that have been most impacted by meeting and worshipping on-line have been both our youngest and oldest members. These members have had limited ability to engage on-line worship, resulting in little or no connection to church during pandemic.
- 4) The nursery is staffed typically by high school aged students who will be among the last to be vaccinated.

What Is Being Discussed

In response to the above challenges, considerations are being discussed by the Re-Entry Team, Vestry, and Staff.

Key Impacted Members of the Body: We are currently exploring nursery protocols in the wider Episcopal Church (the Diocese of Minnesota does not currently have one) to get a sense for what aspects might be needed to create and staff a safe, healthy nursery environment.

For both elders and our youngest members, down the road we may initially prioritize in-person indoor events and worship for these two groups.

Ventilation/Air Purification Systems: While specific air purification and ventilating systems are thought to reduce the spread of COVID-19, it is not yet known whether improved air purification systems are needed to prevent spread of the disease among vaccinated persons. We continue to work on evaluating the need, and if there is a need, what type of system would work best and are currently receiving input from contractors and specializing HVAC engineers. If needed, rectifying this issue likely will have a significant capital cost.

Outdoor, In-Person Gatherings: Because indoor gatherings carry more risk, we are, for the spring and summer, discussing outdoor worship options. You will notice for Holy Week, for example, that we will offer a Palm Sunday outdoor procession and an outdoor Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday at which we will “break our fast” and celebrate Holy Eucharist together.

Live-Stream Worship: Once we are able to gather in-person we anticipate offering a live-stream component to our worship, allowing parishioners who are not yet comfortable or able to gather to still worship with their community. We are currently receiving bids for needed AV equipment and technology. Again, we anticipate this equipment will come with a significant price tag.

Finally, there’s just a lot we don’t know. As we’ve experienced for the past year, COVID is fluid. We don’t know when it will be safe to return to church without restrictions, or if (God forbid) greater restrictions come into play due to an alternate virus strain resistant to vaccine. What is most important is that we make decisions together, thoughtfully, using data and science and recommended protocols, and that we do all of that without leaving anyone behind. Things do appear to be heading in a hopeful and restorative direction and we **will**, eventually, get to a place where we can all be together in our beautiful sanctuary.

Please contact us if you want to: offer your opinion, ask a question, offer to help organize the millions of details needed for in-person worship, finance needed tech equipment or ventilation, or fill in any gap you may see in our deliberations.

We are a loving, thoughtful community of faith with many members, all unique and essential parts of the one body of Christ.

May God’s Peace be Yours,

Devon Anderson, Rector

And the Trinity Vestry

Sam Wiant, Senior Warden

Julie Campanelli, Junior Warden

Vestry Members: Sarah Allcock, Laura Brubaker, Ajit Daniel, Margaret DiMarco, Heidi

Groven. Sally Hockinson, Steve Roman, and Craig Schmidt