

# St. Columba's Episcopal Church

## Re-gathering

In just a few months, this pandemic has dramatically changed our lives and turned our world upside down. The pain and anxieties it has caused around us are real. Additionally, as Christians we grieve the inability to meet in person with our church communities. We deeply desire to gather again. However, we must consider how to do so in safe ways that consider our most vulnerable neighbors and do not fuel the spread of COVID-19. It is important for us to remember that the Church never actually closed, just the doors to our buildings. As Christ's disciples, we are learning to live out our calling to worship, pray, encourage, witness, disciple, and serve in creative ways that minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We've gone online, moved our small groups to video chats, and found new ways to love our neighbors. Now the time has to come to regather in person. We have taken the following precautions to make the transition as smooth as possible.

### **ENTERING THE CHURCH:**

- The 42<sup>nd</sup> and Albemarle Street doors will be the only entrances available for Sunday services. Both doors will be propped to reduce touching of doorknobs, doors, and other high touch areas.

### **WHAT ABOUT MASKS?**

- Masks will be mandatory. No face mask can eliminate all particles of course, but face masks have been proven to help reduce the transmission of potentially infected particles, and even if you're not experiencing symptoms, you may be asymptomatic carrier of the coronavirus. Remember, if you don't have a face mask, we will happily give you a disposable one.

### **WHAT PRECAUTIONS ARE WE TAKING?**

- Social distancing is encouraged with the exception of families sitting together
- Seats will be assigned upon entry; families will be allowed to sit together
- Multiple hand sanitizer stations added throughout the campus
- No handshaking is permitted
- Windows will be open during service to increase air circulation and ventilation
- No passing of offering buckets
- No self-serve coffee stations

- Bulletins will be provided, but they can also be accessed online to be printed out prior to arrival or they can be accessed on phones/tablets.
- The doors will remain open, so you do not need to touch them.
- Restrooms will be cleaned frequently during services.

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?**

- Monitor your health and stay home if you don't feel well or have a fever.
- Social distance at 6 ft. apart while in the building.
- Wear a mask for the duration of your time in the building.
- Avoid making physical contact with one another (handshaking, hugging, high fives, etc.)
- Hand sanitizer will be available for use, but consider bringing your own pocket size.
- It is recommended that you sit in your household units.
- There will not be a welcome committee. Take care when entering the premises and pay attention to the signage directing you.

## **Additional Notes:**

### **Sanitation and Cleaning**

The pews will be sanitized after each service and frequently touched areas like bathrooms, doorknobs, microphones will be frequently cleaned too. All entrance doors will be propped open and all water fountains will be roped off. The entire sanctuary will be re-cleaned when services are done.

Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be readily available throughout the church.

### **Removal of Items in High Touch Areas**

Hymnals, Bibles and pens in the pews have all been removed.

### **Sacraments**

There will be a "no touch" consecration and distribution. Communion will be available in one kind only (wafers).

### Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Q: How are we handling mask-wearing?** *A: Everyone is required to wear a mask when attending worship services and other programs. Musicians will be wearing masks as well as any staff not speaking on stage. Masks are available at all entrances (as well as hand-sanitizer) for anyone in need of one.*
- **Q: How are we encouraging social distancing?** *A: We have assigned seating in the Nave based on registration. We also eliminated rows of pews to encourage social distancing.*

- **Q: How are we keeping the church campus clean?** *A: We have upgraded our air filters and changed our HVAC schedule to allow more outside air in the building. We also plan to thoroughly disinfect, clean and wipe down all door handles, pews, seats and tables after each service/program.*

We have taken enhanced health and safety measures around campus to keep you safe, however, an inherent risk of exposure to the novel coronavirus exists in any public place where a number of people are present. COVID-19 is an extremely contagious disease, so please carefully consider your circumstances before deciding whether to attend. According to the CDC, senior citizens and those with underlying medical conditions are especially vulnerable. Remember, as much as we'd like to see you in-person, if you're not ready or able to come back yet you shouldn't feel any pressure or obligation to be in the building.