



****Additional Worship Protocol Update. Please read thoroughly. Thank you!****

June 30, 2021

Beloved Friends and Members of the Church,

Singing has long been an important aspect of worship! After all, music, hymns, and the act of congregational singing has a way of ministering to many of us in deeply moving ways. While we have kept music alive in our worship through a variety of efforts during the pandemic, the question of “when will we be able to sing again in the sanctuary?” has been on the hearts of those who long for this special element of worship to return. As we continue to see steadily low COVID-19 case numbers in the state of Maine and in the Midcoast, and with relatively high vaccination rates in Wiscasset, neighboring communities, and in our congregation, we are ready to take another step toward singing!

At our Church Council meeting in June, the Council approved unanimously the following step:

- 1) **Beginning Sunday, July 4th**, congregational singing in the sanctuary will resume **with masks**.

Therefore, beginning this Sunday, whether you wear a mask throughout the entire service or not, please bring a mask with you for when we sing. Disposable masks are also available as you arrive if needed. When we come to a moment of singing, everyone will be asked to put their mask on as we join our voices in song!

Why are we requiring masks to sing at this time? Ultimately, for me, it is an act of care and compassion for those who are not able to get vaccinated as we continue to work our way out of this pandemic as a society. With singing still being considered a higher-risk activity for those who are unvaccinated, masks help mitigate this risk as we want our worship experience to be welcoming and as safe as possible for all. Dr. Nirav Shah of

the Maine CDC has also signaled to the Maine Council of Churches that singing without masks should not be encouraged at this time. Holding all of this, we are striving to be faithful as we also strive to move forward.

In addition, by Diaconate approval, hymnals and Bibles will be returned to every-other pew given that surface-to-surface COVID transmission is very low risk. The prayer book will also return to the back of the sanctuary where you can write prayer requests as you arrive for worship. Requests can still be shared with me throughout the week as well.

At this time, all other protocols remain in place:

- 1) Per U.S. CDC guidance, masks are **recommended for the entirety of the service** for those who are not fully vaccinated. Masks are also encouraged for those who prefer or feel more comfortable with a mask.
- 2) Capacity limits have been lifted and no sign-ups are required ahead of time.
- 3) Social distancing has been eased and we ask individuals to be seated in pews where hymnals and Bibles are present. Please be respectful of those around you.
- 4) Outdoor seating is available (weather permitting).
- 5) An attendance list of all worshipping in-person (inside or outside) will be kept at this time for contact tracing purposes.
- 6) Hand sanitizer will be at the entrance for use.
- 7) We will not be passing the collection plate. Offerings may be left in a plate by the door as you enter or may be mailed to the church office.
- 8) There will be no passing the microphone for announcements or prayer requests.

These protocols will, of course, be re-evaluated as we journey onward. Please know that **worship will continue to be livestreamed**, and is available at 10am on Zoom and Facebook Live. A recording of the service will continue to be made available afterwards on our YouTube channel.

As always, if you have cold or flu-like symptoms, if you have a fever, if you have been in contact with a Covid-19 positive person in the last 14 days, or if you have health concerns for yourself or others in your household, please worship virtually for the safety of our congregation and community.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact Council President Anne Harris (annepharris58@gmail.com or 207-882-7705) or myself (joshfitterling@myfairpoint.net or 207-882-7544).

May we be loving toward one another as we again sing of our loving God!

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Josh Fitterling, Minister