**St. Andrew’s, Sidney**

**“Trial” Re-Opening 2020**

Your parish leadership has been wondering if it makes sense to do a “trial” opening- that is, to experiment with a couple of possible ways to do services in person, rather than to decide at the outset which approach to take. If we are a creative spiritual community, then experimenting with ways to worship in order to find the way or ways that work(s) best for our congregation seems to me to be a valid approach. And, given the way the virus seems to re-emerge in other places, it is possible that we will be closing down, again, this fall. But we have no way of knowing if that will happen, so we are simply seeing what is possible at this time and we’ll adjust as we need to do in the future.

Although some of these points are mandated by the diocese, much of them are not, and are simply the way we might move forward, here at St. Andrew’s, given the pandemic. As you will see, there are many of the finer points of the diocese Safety Plan that are not covered in this plan; they are covered in the actual Safety Plan that is attached.

Your wardens, parish council, the Rev. Juli and I are proposing that we have two experimental services this summer: an outdoor service and an indoor service.

For each of the services, we would have people sign up in order to attend. The process of this signing-up might be that for a period of a week or ten days people may either email or telephone with their preference. When the week has elapsed, we will draw names for each service and advise people of the outcome of the draw. That way, there would be no rush to sign up nor a disadvantage for those who telephoned rather than emailed, etc. This draw process would entail a great deal of work for the people operating the draw, so might not be a realistic way to manage attendance over the long haul, but for the experimental trial opening, we believe it will be do-able. **The process of the sign-up is set out on the attached document entitled: “Sign-Up Protocol for St. Andrew’s”.**

For the indoor service, the maximum number of people is limited by the space to between 20 and 35 plus clergy and organist. For the outside service, the provincial limit of 50 is probably beyond what is possible, given the need to hear what is being said, so we are planning for a maximum of 40.

We believed it might be useful for people to have an idea of what you might expect if you attended one of these services, so we will be creating a short video which will be posted on the website. You may wish to have a look at it before you contact the office to indicate your interest in one or both of the services.

The services will be kept short- (approximately 30 minutes) as the medical experts suggest shorter gatherings are better than longer ones, especially for indoor gatherings. There would be no singing in the services. Jim will play a prelude, a postlude and some music (not a hymn) during communion. For both services, the Sanctus and the Lord’s Prayer will be said, not sung. Passing of the peace would be verbal, only, not physical, and people may stand or remain seated as they choose, but will stay at their chair and not move about. No plate will be passed for the offerings, but there will be a plate at the entrance into which you might drop an envelope.

We will continue to record the services as we have been doing, rather than trying to record the trial in-person services. That way, the recorded services can have music.

For each service there would be one reader for all the laity readings (Epistle, Gospel, Prayers of the People) and no lay liturgical assistant. The communion would be offered as the diocese has suggested- by people remaining in their seats and one of the clergy, in a mask, walking among the seated congregants and offering the bread. People who wish to receive communion will simply hold their hands out, folded together, palms up. Those who do not wish to receive communion will cross their arms over their chest when the clergy person approaches.

For the indoor service, people would be seated by the sidesperson- from front to back. The reverse for leaving. For the outdoor service, the sidesperson would direct people to the place they are to set up their chairs. People will be asked to bring a chair for themselves, although a few folding chairs will be available for those who do not bring one. The placement of the chairs will be set out in advance by markers identifying the locations on which chairs are to be set up. In both services, people will not be choosing their own seats/areas as this would lead to people crossing over each other as they took seats.

Children would need to stay seated with their parents. There will be no Sunday School. This may mean some families may choose not to attend, but that is the criterion for children set by the diocese. As an aside, we need to find a way for children to safely be involved in church; in the present circumstances, I am not sure what that might look like.

Bulletins will be printed and set out on a table for people to pick up and then take with them as they leave.

**People attending the services (both indoors and outdoors) will be required to wear a mask during the service.** If a person does not have a mask, one will be provided. The masks can be removed during communion, but then will be put on, again, afterwards. Wearing a mask can feel odd, but it is an act of compassion to those around you, and if nurses can wear them all day long, it is not too much to ask us to wear them for a half hour service.

For both services, everyone will be asked to use hand sanitizer- entering and leaving. The single washroom will be open; the others will be taped off. In the washroom will be surface and hand sanitizer, and written instructions for wiping down surfaces after use. As the services will be short, it is hoped that the use of the washroom will be fairly limited.

Ingress and egress from the indoor service will be regulated- with the sidesperson helping people negotiate their way in and out of the building.

As is required by the diocese, everyone attending either service will need to be signed in by a sidesperson. That sidesperson will have the list of those whose names have been drawn to attend, and will check them off as they arrive. (As not everyone knows everyone’s name, to save embarrassment everyone will be asked to say their name as they arrive.)

For the indoor service, fans will be operating to pull air up, and a fan will be set at the vestry door, pushing air out. Windows and doors will be open. The “hearing assist” equipment that the sidespersons distribute will be available, but will be wiped down after the service.

After the services there will be no gathering for coffee or fellowship, although if people wish to join each other *off-site*, (maintaining social distancing) that might be a welcome break from our isolation. The Zoom Coffee Hour will continue as it has been going for the past month, or so.

Given holidays and that we need to finalize plans and then get the approval of our Arch Deacon before gathering in person, **parish council and your wardens have decided that the outdoor service be held on Sunday, August 2, and the indoor service be held on Sunday, August 16.**

Once we have had both services, we can reassess how things have worked and what changes or additions need to be put in place to move forward in the fall. In September we may want to consider also offering a mid-week BCP or BAS Eucharist, and the experience of the two proposed experimental services may help us better know how that might be done safely. And, of course, we have been hearing from the official medical people that the fall may bring a new surge of infections as we open our provincial boundaries, in which case we may be back to square one for a while, so we need to remember that this is all an experiment and we need to be flexible.

So, in short, as we consider a “trial” opening of two services this summer we will continue to work through what is possible and safe for everyone, and we will continue to record our worship services on line. And, above all, we will continue to support each other with telephone calls, with short, socially distant visits, and with prayer.

It is a strange time we find ourselves in. But however this experiment plays out, know that God is with us through good times and bad, and we will emerge from this pandemic as strong or stronger than before.

Many Blessings on you and yours,

Eric+