



St Francis Episcopal Church

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March 30, 2021

Dear St. Francis Family,

Much is happening in the life of the parish!

We welcomed The Reverend Jerry Sather and his wife Annette to our parish on 3/16. Jerry+ is already hard at work and I hope you had the opportunity to listen to his outstanding sermon on 3/21. Jerry+ will be guiding the Vestry and the parish through the search process and we are so fortunate that he was chosen for us by Bishop Taylor. Please welcome Jerry+ at drive-through communion or with a phone call or email, jerry.sather@stfrancispalosverdes.org or the church office 310-375-4617.

The Vestry and staff have spent many hours in prayerful consideration of all state, local and diocesan guidelines and the decision to begin in person services on Sunday, April 18th was made at the most recent Vestry meeting. We will start with Sunday services at 10 am only. There are very strict safety guidelines that accompany in person worship services, but the creativity and hard work of many people are making this opportunity a reality. Please read the Q &A below to learn how you can reserve a space and what the requirements to attend are.

Social and Racial Justice issues continue to make headlines across the nation. The Diocese has multiple opportunities in many formats for parishioners to share their experiences with injustice, to educate themselves and to advocate for positive change. Go to www.diocesela.org and click on the links for Claiming Justice and Lifelong Learning to view these important programs.

We have a robust and beautiful Holy Week planned for everyone. Special thanks to Jude+ and Jerry+, the Staff, the Musicians, the Readers, the Altar Guild, and the tireless Peter and Susan Marshall for bringing Holy Week to life for us online this year. You bless the parish with your gifts and talents and tremendous hard work!

Each and every parishioner has supported the parish with such grace and generosity of spirit. Your patience during more than a year of deep disappointments, never ending change, shifting requirements and loneliness for our parish friendships has been remarkable. The book of Galatians (6:9) says *"So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up."* Thank you from the bottom of my heart for not giving up.

Peace,
Holly

Holly Henebry, Senior Warden

In-Person Worship at St. Francis - FAQs

How many people can come to the service?

Approximately 75. This number represents 25% capacity of the building minus the mission-critical servers who make the service happen. No gathering is allowed to have more than 100 people, regardless of building capacity. We will increase capacity as future guidelines allow.

We will continue to have full live-streaming of the service on a permanent basis via Facebook and YouTube. Your St. Francis family is with you live wherever you are!

Do I need a reservation to attend the service?

YES! You MUST have a reservation. Please do not come to the service without a reservation as you will be turned away.

Reservations are first come, first serve, and open the Wednesday before that week's Sunday service. We ask that you consider attending the online service every other week to allow more people to have access to the in-person service.

The online live-stream service is available via Facebook and YouTube every Sunday if you are unable to secure a reservation.

How do I make a reservation?

The link for Sunday Service Reservations will be made widely available via our weekly e-news and the church website www.stfrancispalosverdes.org where you will see a link for Sunday Service Reservations. Click the link and follow the on-screen directions to register and reserve seating for your household. If you do not have internet access you may phone the church office to request a reservation – phone reservations are ONLY for those without internet access, please respect staff time and use the online system if you have internet access.

If there are no more reservations available, you may call the church office at 310-375-4617 to be placed on a waiting list for cancellations.

Seating is by household groups only at this time. When restrictions lift you will be able to reserve seating with people outside of your home but for now you may only sit with people from your own household.

Can I reserve a seat in my favorite pew?

Regrettably, no. Due to different size parties and needing to make sure we adhere to strict social distancing guidelines the ushers will be seating from the front to the back of the church and once you are seated by an usher you may not change seats. Please respect that the ushers are doing their very best to manage the complex arrangements required to seat different sized groups of people safely and socially distant at least 6 feet away from other groups.

If you have a hearing, vision or other disability that requires special seating considerations, please inform an usher and you will be accommodated.

Do I have to wear a mask?

YES! A mask that covers your nose, mouth and chin is required at all times. Bandanas, neck gaiters, masks with vents in them, masks that continually slide off your nose, and any other alternative type of face covering is not acceptable, and you will not be permitted to enter. If you wear a face shield you must also wear a mask. We will have a supply of disposable surgical masks in case you forget yours or your mask does not meet the church's requirements.

Children under the age of 5 are *not* required to wear a mask.

You are being asked to wear a mask to keep others safe and ushers will be reminding everyone to keep their masks properly in place. This is an act of love and care for your fellow parishioners and their health and safety. If you do not wish to wear a mask properly, covering your nose and mouth for the duration of the service, then the online service is the best option for attending at this time.

What else is the church doing to keep me safe?

- In order to make a reservation you will need to answer health screening questions and agree to a liability release for your entire household. Everyone will have their temperature taken and be asked to sanitize their hands before entering the sanctuary.
- The church has one-way traffic patterns – towards the altar down the main aisle and away from the altar down the side aisles.
- The doors of the church will remain open throughout the service to promote air circulation.
- There will be no passing of the peace—a wave or a bow for now. Please stay in your seat for the peace.
- The church will be disinfected after each service.
- Contact tracing information will be gathered at every service. If you learn that you have COVID within 7-days of attending a service, please contact the clergy so that we can notify others that they may have been exposed. Your name will NOT be shared, we will only say that someone attending has tested positive so that other service attendees can take appropriate steps to quarantine.

Will the choir be singing?

Not yet. Producing live music has significant restrictions, requires specialized masks, and a large amount of space for social distancing. Our Director of Music is investigating ways to bring live music to the parish safely. For now, we will have live organ music and the choral performances will be pre-taped and played back for those attending in person. Music is exceptionally important to the parish and rest assured that we will bring it back live as soon as we can do so practically and safely.

Can we take communion?

Yes, but it is bread only still per Diocesan rules. We will enjoy the entire service together and then the ushers will dismiss people from the back of the church to the front and you will be communicated by Jerry+ and Jude+ as you depart through the side stained-glass doors at the rear of the church. Do not remove your mask to take the host until you are outside and safely away from the doors. Once you have consumed the host, please immediately put your mask back on.

Is there coffee hour? Can we socialize on the church patio after the service?

Regrettably, not yet. Once you leave the church, we ask that you not congregate on the patio but head straight for your cars while still wearing your mask. Ushers will be reminding people not to congregate.

We know that this will be really hard as we have missed each other and our time visiting terribly, but we must choose safety first. Restrictions will eventually lift and as soon as it is safe, we will be bringing back many of the things that we all wish we could have now. Please be patient and choose to love the church and its people by acting safely.

What about Sunday School?

Not yet. We need to take “baby steps” as we open and are also required to get through a mandated period without an outbreak until we can begin to add in other types of in person gatherings. Children of all ages are welcome in the service!

What about the 8 o'clock service?

Safety requirements make putting on an in-person service exceptionally more complex. We will be “learning the ropes” with the 10 am service and will review adding the 8 am service once we have gained strong experience with all the special requirements. Please be patient as we learn, adjust and respond to what is still an ever-changing environment of safety protocols.

Now that we have an in-person service does this mean outside groups can meet at St. Francis?

Not yet. We have a waiting period to get through to be sure our in-person gathering does not cause an outbreak and we have to be aware of the strain on resources that constant disinfecting of spaces requires.

I disagree with these procedures! Who do I share my thoughts with?

The Vestry, Clergy and Staff have worked very hard to make our procedures safe and reasonable. A tremendous amount of prayer, thought, research and care has gone into crafting them. We will be evaluating after every service to update or discard things that do not serve the parish well.

If you feel that something can be done better, please share your thoughts with the Clergy, with the Senior Warden or any member of the Vestry. We ask that you do so in a collegial, constructive and thoughtful manner keeping in mind that the people who crafted the current plan are imperfect humans with great love for our church.