

Regathering In-Person Protocols

Holy Family, Half Moon Bay

November 28th, 2021

Subject to revision based on latest health orders and Diocesan requirements

We are excited to be able to start having in-person services again this Sunday, November 28th – the first Sunday of Advent. While things are not “as they were”, and we still live with many of the hardships of the pandemic, let us enter into Advent hopefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

This letter will explain some logistics of our regathering; specifically, a new pattern for our shared life as two congregations. Our COVID-19 protocols then follow, which delineate the ways we are each being asked to help keep our community healthy and safe.

Schedule: 10 am on Sundays

As a result of our worshipping “together” at 10 am on Sundays since the pandemic began, the Bishop’s Committees of both churches looked at ways to make coming back together possible without losing some of the good things we have done and learned over the past two years.

Before the pandemic, Holy Family and Good Shepherd met at different times with Vicar Michael traveling over the hill in between, hoping for no delays. This left Holy Family with less “vicar time” and Good Shepherd frequently delaying the start of worship. During the pandemic, while many have felt the grief of not being able to gather in our sacred sites and be with our close friends in person, many have also enjoyed being able to worship together across geographic limits and have felt an expanded sense of the Body of Christ through our continued worship together online. People have joined us from all over the country!

As we plan for in-person gatherings, we also want to keep the Zoom option for those who are not yet able to join in-person gatherings because they are not

vaccinated or because of their personal health needs – as well as those “shut-ins” and people who live out of the area who have faithfully participated during this pandemic!

After reflecting on this and the feedback members have given us, the two Bishop’s Committees, in preparing for resuming in-person worship, have agreed to keep the 10 o’clock hour for our worship for both congregations. Vicar Michael will alternate sites weekly, while, with the help of some technology, members will be able to gather at both locations each week (along with those joining us online) to experience and participate in the service together.

We will try this out for a few months and invite feedback on how the congregations are experiencing this arrangement. In the new year, we will invite formal feedback. In addition, you are always welcome to email or call the church offices with ideas, concerns, and questions.

So... this Sunday, November 28th, we will be taking our first step at welcoming people back in person at both Holy Family and Good Shepherd for 10 a.m. gatherings for worship, and we will continue to offer the service via Zoom for those who cannot attend.

COVID-19 Protocols

Here is what we are asking of you to help keep everyone, especially our most vulnerable, safe and healthy: our COVID protocols for in-person gatherings.

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND IN PERSON:

1. Please register in advance online each week: a link will be provided in weekly emails. This will help us both in planning the service logistics and with contact tracing.
2. Correct wearing of masks indoors (over both mouth and nose) for all persons over age two is a continued order from our county health department and the policy of the Diocese.

3. Anyone with symptoms of illness should stay home. We are continuing to provide the service online so that you can participate while recuperating.
4. If you are not vaccinated, please stay home and participate online rather than in person. While vaccination is a personal choice, it is one that has consequences beyond our individual person, and not being vaccinated can have harmful consequences for others. We are continuing to provide worship online so that you can stay connected with us until it is safer to more fully reopen our gatherings. Children who recently became eligible and are in the process of vaccination, as well as younger children who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated may attend with their vaccinated families. This should be noted on your registration form so that we can take appropriate precautions.
5. We are asking all members to provide us with proof of vaccination. We are anticipating that the county or Diocese may require this in the future if there is a holiday surge. Nearby counties are already requiring this, so if you provide yours now, it will save us from having to “scramble” later. You may provide this by email to admin@holyfamilyhmb or admin@goodshepherdbelmont.org. Alternatively, we can take a photo/copy on-site on Sunday mornings (please arrive a little early to give time for this before the service begins). Any records submitted will be kept confidential and destroyed when no longer needed. Thank you for your consideration.

Worship Indoors:

- Please bring a mask (we will have a limited supply of extras if you need one).
- We will have hand sanitizer for use, but feel free to bring your own.
- If you have registered online in advance, thank you! If you have not registered, we will ask you to do so onsite.
- For the safety of our congregations, unvaccinated adults will be asked to leave (and worship via Zoom at home).

- To provide adequate ventilation we will be opening the doors (and possibly windows). As a result, we will not be running the heat. Dress appropriately and feel free to bring a blanket if that would help.
- We will ask people to sit at appropriate distances (families may sit together in “pods”).
- Communion will be distributed at both churches. Rather than having people come forward to receive Communion, the ministers will carry the Communion to the people in their seats. The bread and wine will be administered in small cups to each person, rather than using the “common cup”. We will be asking people to delay removing their masks and consuming Communion until the ministers have moved to the next group.
- New technology will be prominent and used throughout the service. We will be experimenting with ways to make this less obtrusive, but it is a visible reminder that we are working hard to be inclusive of those who are not able to join us in person.
- At the Passing of the Peace, please use alternatives to hugging and handshaking (the peace sign, a gentle bow with hands in a “praying” position, etc.).
- Other guidance may be given on-site by the celebrant, as advised by the regathering committee or the diocese/county.

Coffee Hour & Socializing before/after the service:

- For now, Coffee Hour will be outside, weather permitting.
- If you are closer than 6 feet from someone not in your pod we ask that you continue to wear a mask.
- When getting coffee or snacks, or if you are within 6 feet of the coffee or snacks, we ask that you wear a mask and sanitize your hands before touching the coffee, coffee cups, or food.
- Before and after the service, we ask that you limit socializing to outdoors so that we can all maintain appropriate social distancing;

- As with the Peace, when greeting one another, please use alternatives to hugging and handshaking (the peace sign, a gentle bow with hands in “praying” position, etc.).

Changes, new protocols, and new technology can feel disruptively noticeable and even intrusive at first, but they will help keep us safe, allow us to gather and experience some of the traditions and joys of community that we have been yearning for, and keep us connected to those who are not able to join us in person just yet. We will be asking for and doing our best to model patience and grace as we try things out, evaluate, adapt, and discern our way forward together. Thank you for being part of this extended family of Good Shepherd and Holy Family, and for all that you do to help sustain our common life and ministry.