

Dear St. John's Family and Friends,

These past three months have been challenging for our nation, community, parish and perhaps each one of us individually. For one who's spiritual life is nurtured by the gathering of a faith community in person to celebrate God's presence in the Word and in Holy Communion, it is disheartening not being able to do so. With much appreciation, I am grateful to all who contributed their time and talent to making our virtual services so beautiful and prayerful.

When our state began a phased reopening, Bishop Susan asked each parish to develop an action plan for the regathering of the parish for in-person worship. The action plan was to consider each of the reopening guidelines set forth by the state and church. The task force of St. John's did complete the action plan which was submitted and approved by Bishop Susan without reservation or modification. I want to thank the members of the task force for their careful and thoughtful work toward developing this action plan.

Before automatically regathering for in-person worship, and with the health and safety of our parish in mind, I consulted the public health data for Chula Vista. The data states that the number of new cases of coronavirus continue to increase each day by 1-2%. While not a spike, it is still an increase. Because the virus has "community transmission status", it can be contracted elsewhere in the county and from asymptomatic carriers, therefore, the true prevalence may be unknown.

I wanted to get your thoughts about regathering so I sent a survey to the parish. Of those who responded, the results indicated that 10 people felt it was "safe" to regather; and 13 people stated that they had "concerns" or that it was "not safe".

I met with the vestry last night to discuss the possibility of St. John's regathering for in-person worship given the guidelines, public health data and your thoughts. The vestry decided that we should not regather for in-person worship until the public health data flattens or begins to decrease. This was a difficult decision which we agonized over in our discussion. Ultimately, the decision came down to ensuring your health and safety, and due to the guidelines many of you would have been discouraged from attending, which could feel alienating and divisive.

It is our hope that soon will come the time when the virus is controlled, a vaccine is available and we will all be able to gather safely to worship our God in person.

... In the meantime, we will continue our virtual worship service streamed live on Facebook. I will work to make the access easier so that more parishioners can "attend" without trouble. We will also continue to gather on Zoom for coffee hour after our virtual worship service. Please know that each one of you remains in my thoughts and prayers during this time.

Blessings to you all,  
Roger+