

March 25, 2020

Dear Virginia Annual Conference:

You may be asking: When we will sing again?

The Bishop's Work Group on Return to In-Person Worship has been steadily and frequently reviewing the latest studies and guidance around singing and wind instruments. As we have learned more, we have offered opportunities to move slowly back toward the rich musical life we associate with the full praise of God. Here's a summary of where we are:

- Congregational singing is allowed in **outdoor settings** with well-fitting masks and distancing. Because the duration of singing is a risk factor, singing should be limited to 5 minutes total for a worship service—enough for about two hymns. Singing *sotto voce* (in a quiet voice) adds another level of mitigation.
- **No singing is allowed in indoor settings for in-person worship.** But as Rev. Leigh Anne Taylor has outlined in some [remarks on singing](#), this may be the season of alternative explorations—silence, dance, strings and percussion, sign language, and even lament for having to forego the gift of singing.

Why has the Virginia Annual Conference taken this approach when it is clear that some churches have much different standards on singing?

Dr. George Moxley, a member of the Work Group and a physician and rheumatologist at VCU, recently did a [review of the literature on singing](#). He notes that “everyone is fed up with the consequences of this pandemic, but the aim of current measures is to make rational decisions to mitigate risk until it is over. The current measures reflect judgments of risk versus benefit based on admittedly incomplete data.”

Even with falling case rates and increased vaccinations, the pandemic is not over. Viral variants have emerged that are more virulent and infectious than the original COVID-19. Some of these variants seem to attack even those with prior infections or who have been vaccinated. And given that many of our congregations and choirs are people who are vulnerable because of age or medical conditions, it is important for us to stay the course with our mitigation methods, moving cautiously toward the end line.

Vaccination is a very promising development and we are learning a lot more about what fully vaccinated folks can do as new guidance emerges. As Deborah Fuller, a professor of microbiology at the University of Washington, wrote in a [recent article in The Conversation](#), COVID-19 vaccines don't prevent infection, but they reduce the risk of getting seriously ill “to almost zero.”

Even so, we don't yet know the risk of a vaccinated person transmitting the virus to unvaccinated people. The CDC continues to recommend that fully vaccinated persons wear masks, social distance, and avoid medium and large-sized gatherings. As Fuller says, “Because of the emergence of new variants, vaccinated people still have the potential to shed and spread the coronavirus to other people, vaccinated or otherwise.”

Dr. Moxley describes his evaluation process as being guided by three principles: taking all evidence together in a summary and not just anecdotes, recognizing that not all evidence is of the same quality, and factoring in our values and preferences. His summary of current studies on singing can be found on the Work Group web page.

One day soon we will sing a new song to the Lord. We will sing it together and, one day, sing it loudly. While we wait and yearn for that day, we give thanks to God for all the gifts of this season in the life of the Church and pray for the wisdom and courage for the living of these days.

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis and the Return to In-Person Worship Work Group

April 4, 2021 11:00 a.m.

Easter Sunday

Return to Worship – In-Person & Drive-in Services

All vehicles must park with an empty space on each side of your vehicle. In-person worshipers must wear their facemask and remain socially distant; enter the sanctuary's front door and leave from the back door.

Welcome

Greeting

Leader: Christ is risen!

ALL: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Prayer

Lord of Life, submitting to death, you conquered the grave. By being lifted on a cross you draw all peoples to you. By being raised from the dead you restored to humanity all that we had lost through sin. Throughout these fifty days of Easter, we proclaim the marvelous mystery of death and resurrection. For all praise is yours, now and throughout eternity. **Amen.**

Affirmation of Faith

Leader: This is the good news which we have received, in which we stand, and by which we are saved:

ALL: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared first to the women, then to Peter and the Twelve, and then to many faithful witnesses.

We believe Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One of God, the firstborn of all creation, the firstborn from the dead, in whom all things hold together, in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell by the power of the Spirit.

Christ is the head of the body, the church, and by the blood of the cross reconciles all things to God. Amen.

Hymn Musical Interlude

Scripture John 20: 1- 18

Sermon Out of the Darkness and into God's Light

Holy Communion

Pastor: The Lord be with you

Cong.: And also with you.

Pastor: lift up your hearts

Cong. We lift them up to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Cong. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is right and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty, God, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, and set before us the way of life. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Pastor: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ. By the baptism of his suffering and death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. By your great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of your Son from the dead and to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading declaring your wonderful deeds in Christ, who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

Pastor: On the night in which he gave himself up for us, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples and said: Drink from this all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink of it in remembrance of me."

On the day you raised him from the dead he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread, and in the power of the Holy Spirit your Church has continued in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

All: Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again

Pastor: O' Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit on our gathering here today, and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that as this bread is broken and this wine is poured, we may see and remember the presence of the living Christ. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world, the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours Almighty God now and forever. Amen

(At one time, look to the Pastor and follow as he takes and eats the bread and drinks from the cup.)

Unison Prayer: Lord, we thank you for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Hymn #327 "Crown Him with Many Crowns" {All}

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Scripture Reading:

John 20: 1- 18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So, she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." 'Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

03/07/2021

Remember in Prayer

Roberta Blackwell (metastasized breast cancer)	Shirley Leyland (recovering from heart valve replacement)
Jim Bishop	Nell Casto (@ Commonwealth but out of memory care)
Bobby Long (dialysis)	John Carter (Karen Carter's Son)
Margaret Carter (Karen Carter's mother-in-law)	Shawn Miller (Wayne Smith's friend)
Karen Carter	Tony Throckmorton & Family (friends of the Keller Family)
Michael (Mickey) Burshell (biopsy for lung cancer)	Victims & families of the current Mass Shootings (Georgia, Colorado, Illinois, California)
Joann Clark (complications from diabetes)	The Asian American Community
Praise - Vickie Hogge – cancer has shrunk and doctors have been able to do surgery to remove tumor from part of her pancreas & part of her spleen	All First Responders & Essential Personnel

OTHERS IN NEED OF LONG-TERM PRAYER:

Dana Arnold (Donna Bishop's daughter)	Donna Bishop
Cheryl Eanes Dunaway	Lori Eanes (kidney transplant recipient)
Miriam Foote (Barbara Oestreich's mother)	Connie Eanes George
The Keane Family	Patsy Kitching
The Mahoney Family (V. L. Brown's daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren)	Angela O'Brien (V. L. Brown's daughter)
Ace Oestreich	Anne Owen
Phyllis Pape	Barbara Ritch-Brant
Jay Sadler (Nancy Miller's nephew)	Burch & Kendall Vickery
Sue Wilson	ALL CAREGIVERS

"Crown Him with Many Crowns"

#327 United Methodist Hymnal

<https://youtu.be/h1AEiExjmv8>

1. Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.
2. Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing, who died, and rose on high,
who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.
3. Crown him the Lord of peace, whose power a scepter sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease, and all be prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end, and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance ever sweet.
4. Crown him the Lord of love; behold his hands and side,
those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.

2021 Easter Lilies

In Memory of	The Finkel Family	given by Lynn Finkel
In Memory of	The Ridgely Family	given by Lynn Finkel
In Memory of	Louise H. Sanders	given by Romulus Sanders, Jr.
In Memory of	Romulus M. Sanders, Sr.	given by Romulus Sanders, Jr.
In Memory of	J. Gerald Sanders	given by Angela Shackelford
In Memory of	Vernon Hawthorne	given by Angela Shackelford
In Memory of	Forrest	given by Romulus Sanders, Jr.
In Honor of	Julia Currin	given by Romulus Sanders, Jr.
In Honor of	Catherine Sanders	given by Romulus Sanders, Jr.
In Memory of	C. L. "Bill" & Nancy F. McClain	given by The McClain Family
In Memory of	Walter A. Leyland, Jr	given by The McClain Family
In Honor of	Shirley L. Leyland	given by The McClain Family
In Memory of	my mother, Louise Frantz	given by Nancy Miller
In Memory of	my dear friend, Pat Bright	given by Nancy Miller