

## **Reopening Task Force Answers... Because You Asked!**

The Reopening Task Force welcomes your questions and concerns. Below are a few of the questions that have come up, and the responses from the Task Force.

### ***Q: Is the church closed right now?***

A: The church is closed to the general public right now, but open to parishioners. If you need to stop by the office or meet with a staff person, please call ahead and let us know you will be stopping by. In addition, the pastors are available for in-person conversation and prayer. This is done masked, socially distanced in a large room.

### ***Q: I know St Matthew is not offering in-person worship in the sanctuary right now. Are any ministries happening in the church building at this time?***

A: Select ministries are taking place within the church building at this time. This includes small groups of volunteers (usually 2-3 at a time), and a once-a-month in-person event for the confirmation class. Each in-person event is evaluated for safety protocols, and provisions are made for those who choose to participate virtually.

In addition, small funerals and baptisms continue to be held in the sanctuary.

### ***Q: We did all that work on the HVAC system this fall; why can't we gather in the sanctuary for worship on Sunday mornings?***

A: The current elevated rate of Covid-19 community infection impacts our safety, even though we have made HVAC system upgrades for better ventilation and air filtration. If there is a greater rate of Covid-19 infection in the community, there is a greater possibility that an individual with Covid-19 may enter our sanctuary during worship. There are many people with Covid-19 that are asymptomatic, yet can still carry and transmit the infection.

Our model depends on diluting the virus in the space, thereby decreasing the viral load that any person might inhale. We have a mathematical model of the HVAC dilution that we can use to illustrate the risks. In general, the risk is very low. We use the rate/100,000 in our model to give us a baseline estimate of the potential chance of someone being infected. But if there was a person who was infected, then the risk goes up 100X over what it was.

Increased community spread coupled with mutant viral strains that are becoming more prevalent and more easily transmissible continues to increase a potential serious risk to our parishioners by introducing a greater risk of exposure and infection. For these reasons, the Reopening Task Force has been conservative in their recommendations, prioritizing safe ways to meet the spiritual needs of parishioners, and advocating reopening the worship space when the infection rate drops below the "Red Zone," which is an infection rate of fewer than 15 positive cases per 100,000 people per day.

**We invite you to bring your questions and thoughts to a Community Conversation led by the Reopening Task Force on February 7, 2021, at 10 a.m., following Zoom worship.**

Login information will be the same as worship, and will be sent out via constant contact email. We look forward to hearing from you!