

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: The Roman Catholic church is meeting for worship; why can't we?

A: Task Force recommendations are based on the daily infection rate in the towns we serve, a key indicator of community spread in our area. In addition to our studies of airflow, the Task Force has recommended that our communities need to be 'out of the red' to ensure the safety of our congregation meeting in the sanctuary- that is, below new 15 positive cases per 100,000 per day.

Q: I am vaccinated now, and so are a lot of other people. How does that change the Task Force's recommendations?

A: At this time, we are pleased that the vaccination rate is increasing in our state. We are also hopeful that having more and more people vaccinated will have a positive impact, decreasing the Covid infection rates in our community. Once this occurs, and based on our metrics, we will be able to offer in-person services in the sanctuary.

Q: When we return to worship in the sanctuary, will we abide by the same protocols we did last fall, such as mask wearing and sitting 9 feet apart?

A: As rates continue to fall in our towns and the impact of variants of Covid-19 are better understood, it is likely we will be able to relax some protocols inside the sanctuary, such as seating distance. We are likely to continue wearing masks indoors as long as the pandemic continues.

Q: When will outside worship begin again? Will any protocols change outside?

A: We plan to offer outdoor worship at 11am beginning April 11, weather permitting. Since coronavirus spreads much less easily outdoors than indoors, the current plan is to worship at 9am on Zoom and 11am outdoors for the coming weeks until infection rates decrease.

Q: The governor of Connecticut has come out with new guidelines for businesses which state that they can return to 100% seating capacity. How does this affect our guidelines for reopening at St Matthew?

A: Throughout the pandemic the Reopening Task Force has been more conservative in their recommendations to the Council than the governor's state mandates. Right now the governor has lifted capacity limits in churches (<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Covid-19-Knowledge-Base/Gatherings>); however, guidance is still in place which requires at least 6 feet of social distancing and wearing masks. Task Force guidance to the Council is based on a number of factors, but as safety conditions improve, we plan to return to worship in the sanctuary and may be able to reduce the space between congregants in the sanctuary and increase our seating capacity.