

July 23, 2020

Dear NPUMC Family,

I wanted to give you an update on our progress toward reopening for in person worship in compliance with the guidelines of the NYAC. We began our work in the sanctuary, as the most vital space in the church. We have established traffic patterns for how we will come into and go out of worship, reoriented the worship space to improve visibility and consolidate the new equipment.

Prioritizing as we did means I can now give you a pretty clear sense of what coming back will look like. Everyone will enter the sanctuary from Main Street and exit through the funeral door onto Grove Street. If there are worshippers with mobility issues, arrangements will need to be made ahead of time for entry through the funeral door. The pews will be clearly marked for social distancing. Only families or couples may sit together. Since each and every space that is occupied, however briefly, will need to be thoroughly sanitized after every service, we will only be opening the single bathroom in the social hall, accessible only via the lift. Here are some other points to note:

- Everyone **must** wear a mask. In fact, if anyone is not complying with this guideline, all clergy have been instructed to immediately offer a benediction and send everyone home.
- There can be no congregational singing. Soloist are permitted, with extra distancing.
- There will be no bibles, hymnals, bulletins, or seat cushions, unless you bring your own.
- Communion as we know and love it is not permitted.
- No coffee hour or congregating in the church. This includes no circle/passing of the peace.
- Only the sanctuary and the single bathroom will be accessible.
- Offerings will be taken at the end of service via a drop box.
- We will continue with one service at 9:45.
- The Bishop continues to strongly advise anyone over age 65 to worship from home.

Given these restrictions, many churches have tried returning and decide they prefer online worship. **The Reopening Task Force would like to know if, given these significant changes, you intend to return to in person worship in September. Please email your response to the church at newpaltzumc@gmail.com as soon as you are able.**

In or out of the sanctuary, we continue to do deep, meaningful ministry, reaching a wider and wider network of people. The sanctuary has not been open, but the life of the church most assuredly has been and will be. Thanks so much for all of your patience, flexibility, and help in the work of navigating the waters of our new normal.

Peace and love,

Pastor Jenn