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Subject: One Community, United
Date: Tue, Oct 6, 2020 12:19 pm

Dear Faithful of Saint John's

As the fall season moves along and winter seems not far off, uncertainty and anxiety still invade our thoughts. Positive coronavirus cases in Anchorage have increased dramatically in the past few days and are now higher than they have been at any other time, all of this against a political backdrop that is contentious and divisive in a way unbecoming of our country. A few in our parish urge that we can safely begin large Church gatherings of a hundred or more. Others, out of their own health concerns, have not been to any service for months and will not return until there is a vaccine. What are we to do?

First of all, we will continue to bear patiently and kindly with one another in our differences and remain united in love and charity. That is the way of Christ.

As for Church services, so far we have been able to gather safely in groups of about 40 people. Sometimes, however, our liturgies have been much smaller than this because not everyone in an assigned group attends. To remedy this, we will begin next weekend to clump a couple of groups together that often have several no-shows in order to ensure that we have the possibility each time of about 40 people attending. This will also slightly increase the frequency of Liturgy for everyone and allow each family to come and worship and receive Communion three times a month. We will continue to have three Liturgies each week, Sunday morning, Wednesday evening, and Saturday morning. Saturday Vespers will remain open to any who want to attend, but please sign-in when you come. This new schedule can be found on our website [Service Schedule](#) page. Please look at it and update your own personal calendars.

Here are a few things I especially want to draw your attention to as we continue to gather:

- Please do wear a mask when you are in the Church service. This is believed to significantly reduce potential virus transmission in indoor gatherings. You might think it unnecessary and uncomfortable, but some of your brothers and sisters in Christ will be anxious and fearful if you do not, and you will be the cause of their fear and anxiety. And please wear your mask not only in the service, but also as we gather and depart or visit in the Narthex. Clergy and chanters should also wear a mask in the Narthex. If for legitimate health reasons you cannot wear a mask,

that is understandable, but in that case sing gently and stand perhaps away from the center.

- If you would like to come to a Liturgy to which you are not assigned, please call Deborah Stallman or Fr. Marc and they will tell you if there is room, so that we will not exceed 50 persons present. There will often be some space available. At the same time, if you know you will be absent, let them know this as well. In any case, it is not cool just to show up.
- If you want to come to Confession, please call or email your priest ahead, so that they can arrange a time to meet.
- If you want to receive Communion after Liturgy from reserved Sacrament, instead of from the common spoon, just let the priest who is serving know ahead of time and he will make this possible. A phone call is fine, but a note given to the deacon before Liturgy will also suffice.
- If you are one who has not yet attended any Church service out of concern for your health and would still like to receive Communion, please consider contacting one of the priests to arrange a time when you can receive Communion from the reserved Sacrament apart from any gathering.

In spite of the many differences among us, if we are humble and keep our minds on Christ and His commandments, we will remain together as one community, united. “We will get through this together.”

With prayers for you and your family, respectfully and sincerely yours,

Fr. Marc

*Church Office
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