

**THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH**

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May 6, 2021

Dear Friends and Members of Church of the Messiah,

This is a letter I have long waited to write and I know you have long waited to receive. As of this coming Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am, we will resume in-person worship. We will do so at Linwood Spiritual Center here in Rhinebeck. We have chosen the pavilion at Linwood (see directions below) as a setting for our worship as it allows us to gather out of doors, under a roof with ample seating capacity. It is also a beautiful setting that has been the site for our parish picnic for the past 10 years. We recognize that not everyone will feel comfortable returning to in-person worship. We honor that decision completely, and hope you will join us by Zoom or view the video on YouTube later on Sunday afternoon. As the weeks progress, we anticipate the guidelines evolving and we of course look forward to a return to our church building in the Fall.

There are the important points to consider as we regather.

- There is provision for disabled persons to be dropped off by the pavilion, but parking will be in designated areas along the driveway at Linwood.
- Ushers will guide you to the seating and arrangements for hand sanitizing, gloves, and extra face masks as well as guiding the flow of traffic.
- We will broadcast the service via Zoom and record it, but we will mute and close the video function for everyone watching the service from home.
- Masks are mandatory for everyone attending the service.
- You may sit in family groups or pods, but there is to be none of the traditional socializing of hugs or handshakes, even though it will be tempting to do so. You must maintain at least six feet away from anyone outside of your family.
- If you are feeling sick or have been exposed to someone that has COVID-19, you should not attend services until you test negative for the virus.
- There will be music, but no congregational singing.
- Readers will be 20 feet away from anyone else, and will briefly remove their mask to do the reading. Musicians will also be 20 feet away from each other and the congregation.

- Prayer responses should be said softly.
- There will be offering plates at the entrances to the pavilion. A collection plate will not be passed.
- The exchange of the peace will be done between family or pod members only and we suggest a simple nod rather than an embrace.
- I will wear a mask and gloves throughout the service, except when preaching.
- **Communion will be celebrated.** I'll consecrate both bread and wine, but only the consecrated wafers will be distributed. I will stand in front of the altar and those wishing to receive communion can come forward in single file, masked, and keeping social distancing. You'll receive the host in the palm of your outstretched hand. You will then step to the side and briefly remove your mask and consume the wafer before turning to return to your seats.
- We will experiment with how to conduct the Prayers of the People but for this Sunday, for those of you at home, you will be invited to pray for those needing our prayers. These prayers will be essentially private and not audible to the congregation gathered at Linwood. If you have a special prayer request, simply email or text me before the service and I will name your petitions aloud. Following this Sunday's service, we will review how the prayers went and make adjustments in the weeks to come.
- There will not be a coffee hour after the service.
- We continue to encourage everyone to be vaccinated but if you haven't been vaccinated, please remember to minimize your risk of infecting yourself or possibly others.

This is a joyous moment for us to be able to gather for worship after 60 weeks of separation. The guidelines we have outlined are not meant to dampen that joy, but merely are there for your continued well-being and the safety of the community.

Yours in faith,



Fr. Richard

**Driving Directions to Linwood Spiritual Center**

- From The Church of the Messiah go south on Route 9
- continue south on Route 9 through the traffic light
- After the traffic light, take the first right onto Mill Road
- Linwood Spiritual Center is 3.3 miles on the right. Parking will be indicated by lawn signs which will say Messiah Parking here. We will reevaluate parking when we have a sense of what our Sunday attendance might be.