PLAN: CELEBRATION OF HOLY EUCHARIST AND DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION
ST JOHN’S BOULDER
The Rev. Susan W. Springer 08-29-20

BACKGROUND

With a pre-pandemic ASA of 300, an historic building that cannot be fully and adequately ventilated for aerosolized virus mitigation in colder weather without throwing the organ out of tune, elderly boilers, elderly and aging clergy and liturgical staff, a county health department in-person attendance cap of 50 people, and a majority (estimated 65+) of active parishioners who are older or vulnerable according the CDC, it is not practical or safe to plan for enough in-person worship services to accommodate our entire ASA. Doing anything less accommodating is not inclusive. Inclusivity is one of the core values of St John’s, so it’s vital to uphold it.

Many of our parishioners have expressed an unwillingness to gather in-person indoors in large groups. Many parishioners have further indicated that without the ability to receive Communion (either in person, spiritually, or virtually), they are disengaging from the church. Indeed, our ASA has fallen since the start of the pandemic. Our online worship is applauded as beautiful and moving, but many people have made it clear they come to church primarily for the sacrament of Communion.

We draw from a 715 square mile service area. Our downtown Boulder campus has very limited parking. The geographic distribution of our membership is appended at the end of this document.

Because the bishop has to date indicated an unwillingness to entertain either online Holy Eucharist or even Spiritual Communion, it appears we must find a solution within the bounds of in-person distribution only. We would be open to a drive-up method of distribution (people attend worship online and drive up to receive sacrament) but the bishop has previously rejected this as “commodification” of the Eucharist. The following plan, then, endeavors to assure the requirement of in-person distribution is met, while minimizing risk to any one person or group of people.

PROPOSAL

1. Identify and train 20 Lay Eucharistic Ministers** to serve as “Satellite EM’s” as long as the pandemic discourages the safe engagement of our worship space for multiple weekend services. We’ll need 10 EM’s per Sunday, and at least two Sundays’ worth so each EM serves only once a month—about 20 EM’s in all. St John’s clergy will provide EM training. This plan only works if enough EM’s can be found. If there are 20 EM’s willing, we can provide Communion twice a month. If only 10 willing EM’s can be found, then we can provide Communion once a month.

**https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/lay-eucharistic-minister-lem

2. On the first and—if enough EM’s—third Sunday of every month, have one service of Holy Eucharist in the main church, compliant with all state and county CDC guidelines. Service is live on Zoom and recorded for upload to YouTube. Attendance would be limited to less than 50 people (would probably be more like 20-25), to include only the following persons: altar party, organist, music/tech staff, 2-person altar guild team, lector, 10 EM’s, verger/usher, with a small number of seats available for off-the-street visitors. All would sign in (name/email/phone) so contact tracing possible. Verger would conduct temp scan of all arriving participants. Clear messaging to participants that those with symptoms should not serve or attend.
On second, fourth, and fifth Sundays of every month, continue worship as we’re presently doing: Zoom online non-Eucharistic worship, conducted from presider’s and participants’ homes; uploaded later to YouTube.

3. On first and third Sundays, service participants and attendees all masked. Plexiglas shield in front of pulpit, lectern, and altar so person speaking can remove mask (only when speaking). Live organ music. No live singing. Recorded choir music. Eucharist celebrated at altar. Celebrant consecrates host and wine, and enough commercially pre-packaged Communion packets [See end of this document] for those present at worship and for distribution by Satellite EM’s. Only people not consuming at service are the EM’s. The 10 EM’s would sit, masked and physically distant, in the back rows of the nave, with a couple of side windows in back of nave (away from the organ pipes) open for cross ventilation. Not having the EM’s receive the sacrament in the church minimizes contact between people and also helps the satellite experience feel more inclusive.

4. Using a specially written sending prayer for EM’s, the 10 stand in place at their seats and are sent forth at conclusion of service to 10 satellite locations for distribution of consecrated elements to parishioners who live nearby. Satellite locations could be the front yards of volunteer families or a public park or even a retail parking lot. They’d be decided upon and communicated in advance. They would ideally remain the same for the duration of the pandemic. Attendees would sign up in advance through our database, first come first served, limited to about 20 households. Clear messaging to parish that those with symptoms should not attend.

Baskets containing consecrated packets, hand sanitizer, and printed prayers would be placed in the narthex for EMs to pick up as they left the church. If worship began at 8am or 830am, the satellite distribution would commence at 11am. This gives parishioners ample time to watch the online service from home and then get to their assigned satellite location for distribution of Communion.

5. All parishioners would be asked to attend online church before going to their assigned satellite location for reception of Communion. The EM would lead the masked and physically distanced attendees in a short prayer, distribute the packets, and would receive with the group, closing with another short prayer and a prayer of dismissal. Those who felt safe remaining for conversations in these satellite groups could do so at their own discretion. The distribution/reception service would be so short that it would be doable even in the coldest weather. All would be asked to use the hand sanitizer sent with the EM before receiving. All would be asked to wear masks except when consuming. Leftover consecrated packets would be returned to the church at the EM’s earliest convenience and would become part of the reserved sacrament (after being set aside for decontamination).

6. Music Director would email EM’s a music file to download and play on their phones during the short reception gathering, so all the satellite congregations would be joined by hearing common music, as well as by receiving at a common time.

7. Since elder care facilities currently prohibit in-person visits, the scope of this plan does not presently include traditional one-on-one visits such as an EV would make.

8. In the event of dangerous driving conditions or weather, affected satellite congregations would be notified of cancellation by email or text message.

**LOGIC/ADVANTAGES**

+ Having only one service in the church per Sunday minimizes the indoor, in-person risk, both in numbers and in length of time gathered. We are very aware of the tendency of the virus to remain in the air in an enclosed space,
and also aware of the challenges we face in trying to ventilate the entire church in colder (<40 degrees F ambient) weather.

+ Amplifies lay ministry by engaging 10-20 laypersons as a guild of Satellite EM’s.

+ This plan allows parishioners to reduce their travel, going only as far as one of 10 satellite locations (each parishioner will be assigned to a satellite location) near where they live to receive the sacrament.

+ Follows the consecration rubrics in the BCP, and honors the tradition that calls for people to be physically gathered in person with others to receive Communion. Based on the justification for Communion Under Special Circumstances [BCP p.396]: “This form is intended for use with those who for reasonable cause cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist.” The “reasonable cause” here is the real and dangerous risk of Covid-19 for those who gather indoors for worship.

+ Allows parishioners to gather in smaller numbers, and safely outside, for a minimal amount of time in proximity to others—in short, to assume less risk than they would assume by coming to indoor worship.

+ Promises to build new relationships between parishioners who live in the same Front Range communities, and could form the basis for future satellite gatherings as we confront a changed church, post-pandemic.

END NOTES

[1] This link shows the map used to calculate estimated service area:

https://www.mapdevelopers.com/area_finder.php?polygons=%5B%5B%5B%5B40.224707784672795%2C-105.30026595243307%5D%2C%5B40.235192291986664%2C-105.12723128446432%5D%2C%5B40.2330955203664%2C-105.02286116727682%5D%2C%5B40.2330955203664%2C-104.93497054227682%5D%2C%5B39.81032754757914%2C-104.95145003446432%5D%2C%5B39.76072850475728%2C-105.26318709501119%5D%2C%5B39.95733109811791%2C-105.50831954130025%5D%2C%5B40.074339120566975%2C-105.34936110624166%5D%2C%5B40.224707784672795%2C-105.30026595243307%5D%5D%2C%23AAAAAA%22%2C%22%23000000%22%2C0.4%5D%5D

[2] THIS TABLE SHOWS THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF OUR MEMBERSHIP. A number of these households are “Christmas and Easter” attendees or otherwise not regular in their attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longmont</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niwot</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>413 (broken down further by zip code, below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Superior 8
Broomfield 26
Lafayette 31
Louisville 49
Westminster 8
Denver 16
Arvada 11
Unincorporated (Estimate) 10

[3] BOULDER BREAK-DOWN BY ZIP CODE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of town</th>
<th># of households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80301 NE Boulder and Gunbarrel</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80302 Downtown, Westside, Foothills</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80303 South Boulder, East side south of Arapahoe</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80304 North Boulder</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80305 Table Mesa, Martin Acres</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[4] PROPOSED TEN SATELLITE CONGREGATIONS:

All ten groups have been created and populated in CMO, the church’s membership database. To find them, search acronym + “Satellite Congregation.” NOBO1 AND NOBO2 have been combined into one group for now. 07-27-20

1. “BROSO”—Broomfield and points south: Superior, Westminster, Arvada, Denver
   Total households: 69

2. “LOLY”—Longmont, Lyons, Erie
   Total households: 76

3. “GUNNI”—Boulder 80301 and Niwot
   Total households: 86

4. “DOBO”—Boulder 80302 + Nederland
   Total households: 71

5. “SOBO”—Boulder 80303
   Total households: 70

6. “NOBO1”—Boulder 80304, north of Iris
   Total households: See below

7. “NOBO2”—Boulder 80304, south of Iris
Total households for #6 and 7: 122

8. “TAMME”—Boulder 80305 + Golden
   Total households: 44

9. “LOULA”—Louisville and Lafayette
   Total households: 80

10. “OFLO”—Overflow distribution station at St John’s

[5] AN IMPORTANT NOTE:

Please bear in mind that although these satellite congregations add up to a little over 600 households, only a portion of those households are regularly active worshipers. If our parish membership is ~1400 people, that’s about 2.3 people per household. If our pre-pandemic ASA was 300, and we divide that by 2.3, we’re looking at 130 regularly worshiping households. One also needs to remember that even with outdoor distribution, not all households will elect to participate. So, setting an attendance cap of 30 people (or 20 households) per satellite distribution point seems reasonable as a starting place.

[6] HOW SIGN-UP WORKS:

Our Parish Admin is researching a sign-up app that’s simple to access and use. It may be possible through CMO. A household signs up in advance to receive at their satellite distribution point. The Celebrant and Altar Guild check the sign-up before Sunday and know how many packets to consecrate and send out with each EM. Extras will always be provided.

[7] SAMPLE COMMUNICATION:

Dear parishioner,

Based on your mailing address, your household is assigned to the “SOBO” satellite congregation. On the first and third Sundays of the month, your distribution point for reception of Holy Communion will be the NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network) parking lot at 1685 38th St #100, Boulder, CO 80301. Your Eucharistic Minister will be Tom Brewster.

The 10-minute service of distribution begins at 11am. Please be on time, wear a mask, and refrain from coming if you experience any symptoms of illness. Space is limited to 20 households. Physical distancing between households will be observed. Please sign up in advance on [URL].

Following the service, you are welcome to stay and visit with other parishioners in your satellite congregation. Please do so with discretion and care for the safety of others and for your own household.

In the event of inclement or dangerous weather, cancellation notices will be sent to you by email. If in doubt, please be sure to check before driving to your reception location.
ROLE OF THE EM

a. Attend in-person worship (if comfortable doing so) on Sunday assigned to serve (either first or third). Stand in place at end of service for Sending Prayer. Take basket of consecrated packets, hand sanitizer and drive to assigned satellite distribution point, arriving 10 minutes prior to 11am. Help arriving attendees physical distance in a circle. Ask all to wear masks. Place sanitizer in center of circle and ask all to use it. Place basket of packets in center. At 11am, lead attendees in pre-reception prayer. Invite attendees to step forward, one household at a time, and take sufficient packets for their household. When all are served, invite all to receive together. Play music on phone. When done, lead people in post-reception prayer. Offer words of dismissal.

People take their own trash home with them. Those wishing to stay for conversation may do so at their own discretion.

EM brings basket and leftover packets back to SJ at their earliest convenience.

TrueVine Prefilled Communion Chalice Cups - Bread & Wine Sets (Box of 100)

ITEM #: TC100WB
$49.49

Please Allow 3 or 4 Business Days to Ship

- SACRAMENTAL WINE: This product features premium Sacramental Concord Wine & a 1/2" Sacramental Unleavened Bread. (Contains Alcohol)
- EASY TO OPEN, SILENT, NO-SPILL SEAL: Silent, simple opening for the youth and seniors. Bread in the bottom seal and wine in the top. Hermetically sealed.
- CLASSIC DESIGN: Unique sturdy Chalice shape makes the cup easier to hold, more simple to unseal, and balances well on communion trays and tables.
- CAREFULLY PACKAGED: Sealed hermetically. Fresh and sanitary. Packaged with utmost diligence. Guaranteed arrival with zero leakage, or get a free box on us!
- SHELF LIFE: Unrefrigerated for 3 months. Refrigerate for 6 months. Frozen for 1 year. Due to minimal preservatives used in production, our staff highly recommends refrigeration/freezing for freshest taste.

Gluten free option is available.

https://www.concordiasupply.com/TrueVine-Prefilled-Communion-Chalice-Cups-Bread-Wine-Set-100#