

Report: Survey Results - Online & In-Person Worship June 25, 2020

Thanks to everyone who participated in our parish survey! Here's a quick overview of what we learned:

- **Online worship, and specifically Zoom worship, is working pretty well or OK for most respondents (82%).**
- **People tend to prefer our St. Dunstan's Zoom gatherings** to other forms of online worship.
- Some folks are also worshipping through **other online church services**. Over 20% of survey respondents would like to keep attending the live-streamed diocesan services at 10am.
- Some would like to try **live-streamed worship from St. Dunstan's** in the future when we have the equipment and capacity to do so.

There are lots of reasons online worship doesn't work for everybody:

- Some people are "Zoomed out" from their day jobs.
- Some lack the equipment or technological comfort level.
- Some find that online worship feels passive and disembodied.
- Some struggle to gather their family for worship in front of a computer screen. (Zoom worship is especially hard for younger kids & their grownups.)
- Some are busy and overwhelmed by the demands of this difficult season.
- Some just really miss the physical aspects of in-person church.

Our online offerings are helping a lot of people feel connected and grounded. But there's definitely a call here to **keep reaching out to those whom current online worship does not serve.** Here are a few of the directions we're considering:

- Targeted online worship offerings like StoryChurch for young children.
- Non-worship online gatherings for people who seek companionship but have a hard time with online worship.
- Developing more off-line, at-home resources for spirituality and learning.

So where are we with plans to gather in-person?

(Let me say this once more: Our online worship is not going anywhere!)

Based on recently-issued guidelines from the Diocese of Milwaukee, we will be allowed to begin in-person worship gatherings when these four conditions are met:

1. It is on or after July 12;
2. We have sent a safety plan to the diocese and had it approved;
3. Our county is Green on the Diocese's [Regathering Risk Assessment Dashboard](#);
4. And if the Dashboard shows that the planned gathering size has a less than 1% risk that an infected person will attend.

Compliance with points 3 & 4 will be ongoing. The Dashboard is updated six days a week, and we will be checking it regularly to determine whether we need to change our plans.

As of Thursday, June 25, Dane County is Yellow in the Dashboard due to rising local infection rates. We will continue to watch those numbers to determine whether we could potentially hold a first small gathering on July 12 or need to wait for local rates to trend downward. In the meantime, we are working on our safety plan to submit to the diocese.

It's our understanding that these standards also apply to non-worship gatherings, such as groups within the church who'd like to start meeting in person. We hope to be able to start saying Yes soon - but we're not there yet. Please note that groups meeting on the church grounds **should not expect to use the church restrooms**, per current diocesan guidelines.

You can look at the Dashboard here!

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1uv-7Dx4w1BDQSACf827iWCbflzMSirV2NFIDYosQwD8/edit#gid=872564247>

The survey shows that people's sense of readiness to return to in-person worship range from "Tomorrow" to "Not until everyone is vaccinated."

About 30% of respondents said they'd be ready to try in-person worship soon. That's good news because our in-person worship will need to start with smallish groups of people.

It's also good news that members are taking risks seriously, for themselves, those who share their lives, and the wider community. We fully expect to continue online worship indefinitely: I know many beloved members will not feel safe out and about until there is widespread vaccination.

A word for those who wonder if we're being overly cautious...

I understand that a few of you may feel impatient and don't view COVID as a life-threatening issue. We're each grappling to make sense of these unprecedented circumstances. But I'd like to offer a personal reflection on the subject of risk.

I'm a comparatively healthy person in my mid-40s, and I take COVID very seriously indeed. I have one family member and several friends, all roughly my age and health, who have had the "long-haul" version of COVID, involving fatigue, discomfort, and a variety of other symptoms that last three months and longer.

Our evolving understanding of this disease suggests to me that nobody is "low-risk," only "lower-risk." Please know that I take COVID risk seriously for every single member of my congregation, not just the elders. That's why our commitment to mutual care is so important right now. A lot of COVID spread seems to be caused by people who don't know they have it. Widespread masking, social distancing, and limiting gathering sizes all seem to help mitigate those risks. Even if you don't feel personally concerned about getting COVID, our Christian commitment to love of neighbor calls on us all to do our best to avoid being unwitting spreaders of the virus.

"Long haul" COVID link:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/06/covid-19-coronavirus-longterm-symptoms-months/612679/>

"Should we even be considering gathering in person, if it's that risky?"

1. It is upsetting to think about the possibility of a COVID outbreak at St. Dunstan's, which is why our leadership is studying the lowest-risk ways to gather and worship. However, not gathering has costs, too. Some folks are struggling and would welcome a chance for brief, limited in-person worship. Epidemiologists are warning that there may be more lock-downs ahead, so it is reasonable to use this more temperate period for some to reconnect.
2. Our diocesan criteria allow us to meet only when the likelihood of an infected person coming to a gathering is lower than 1%. That means that, for every hundred times you gather a group of a given size, an infected person will attend *one* of those times. That is a very cautious standard. It means we have a 99% chance of a safe gathering.
3. We're also putting plans in place to minimize the likelihood of transmission **EVEN IF** somebody attended who was infected. We'll meet outdoors, require masks and physical distancing at gatherings, and limit the gatherings' length and size. We won't share food or sing together, even though we love to do both of those things.

When it becomes possible to come to church, you'll be able to do so knowing that this community is committed to a shared set of practices to maintain one another's wellbeing. Look for more information on the specifics of our safety plan in the weeks ahead.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU...

Do you want to worship in person soon? We know from our survey that some members would like to gather for in-person worship as soon as possible. Those people will have an important role in helping us explore what in-person, small-group worship can look like, given current guidelines and best practices. If you are one of those people, please let me know! Specifically, I am looking for people who:

- Are eager to worship in person as soon as possible
- Reasonably believe themselves to be at lower risk of serious illness
- Are willing to abide by our safety guidelines (most importantly, masking; physical distancing; and staying home if you have any symptoms or known exposure)
- Are willing to be part of a process of exploring what in-person worship could be

If this is you, then I want to hear from you! Please be in touch by email at revmiranda@stdunstans.com or 608-469-7085 (call or text).

Are you looking for more connection with fellow church folks? Our parish survey showed a lot of interest in connection outside of worship. Here are some possibilities:

- Postcard Pals or other ways of exchanging mail
- Online fellowship groups (meet weekly or biweekly to check in and chat)
- Prayer companions (meet online or connect in other ways to pray together or for each other)
- Regular phone check-ins/conversations with a church contact

If you're interested in any of these options (or have other ideas), please email office@stdunstans.com or leave a message at 608-238-2781 with your name and any particular ideas that interest you. (If you'd like to make calls, send cards, or gather a group, let us know that too!)