



Dear Beloved Community of St Raphaelites!

Thank you for your patience, trust and forbearance during these last many months as we have followed guidelines to restrict services and our 'usual' way of

being together – we have been 'the church that has left the building' and learnt so much during this that has been both valuable and hard. We are not out of the Covid woods yet. However, please take a look at the diocesan guidelines noted in the Bishop's Pastoral letter last month ([Pastoral Letter from Bishop Mark January 29, 2021 – St. Raphael Episcopal Church \(sreclex.org\)](https://www.sreclex.org/)). I know you will have heard news from our Governor about a reduction in Covid infections recently, and that you will have noticed that our county is now what the diocese describes as 'orange' having moved out from its 'red' status. That means the Covid-time restrictions and recommendations have moved from 'critical' to 'at risk'. And that means that, though we shall continue with livestreaming into the future, we can move slowly forward in our plans to return to in person worship at St Raphael's!

I promised that I would write when there was a change in in-person worship, and this is the hoped-for plan:

- Return to in-person worship with 8.30 & 11 am Eucharist services on March 14 & 21. We will have sign up via Eminders for a total of 25 in each service. That includes clergy, videographers, organist and cantor. Only the 11 am service will have music and videography for livestreaming at 11am service. There will be no choir and no communal singing, I'm afraid, and Communion will be offered in one kind only (blessed wafers), as we have done through this Covid season. Masks, social distancing and hand sanitizing will be required for all. Please arrive early for services to help our arrangements.
- For Palm Sunday, we are making arrangements for an outdoor service (within our guidelines agreed last May by vestry). In the event of bad weather, we shall worship inside with a maximum of 25 (as above). More details will follow in Eminders.
- During Holy Week, the plan is as follows:
 - o Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday midday Eucharist services in-person sign-ups and following all guidelines. These services will be on Facebook live.
 - o Maundy Thursday, Good Friday & Easter Saturday Vigil services will be at 6.30 pm and live-streamed to Facebook and Vimeo, so that those feeling uncomfortable to sign up may still participate at home. On Good Friday at midday there will be a live stream of the Stations of the Cross. Sign-up will be possible for each of these services, and all guidelines and restrictions will required.

- o Easter Sunday services are being planned for a big celebration of New Life!
 - 7.30 am service with Hot Cross Buns in Tobit's Trace
 - 8.30 am service in-person (as usual, without music)
 - 11 am service in-person (with organist and cantor) & live-streamed.
 - 4 pm service in-person (repeat of 8.30 am service) & outside.
 - 6.30 pm service in-person (repeat of 11 am service)

We are making plans to celebrate in special ways every Sunday of the Easter Season through to Pentecost, to allow for anyone who doesn't yet feel comfortable on April 4 to know that you will return to a celebration of the goodness, truth and beauty of the Resurrection throughout April/May. I'll pass on details as they become firm, but I want to offer you plenty of opportunities to catch up and fellowship (outside and inside), renew the expression of our communal faith, enjoy the beauty of St Raphael's (inside and outside), and celebrate God's goodness and presence with us as safely as we are able, even as we continue to pray for our county to turn 'yellow' and finally 'green'!

I so look forward to seeing you all again!

Stay well and stay safe,

with my love and prayers,

Rev Helen

