

THE MESSENGER

Special Edition

May 2021

Anchored in Hope

By Father Joshua Drake

I am pleased to announce that Bishop Menees has recently allowed us to resume indoor worship. We will be returning to the Pershing Avenue location on May 23, with Mass starting at 10:00 a.m. Although we will be returning to our pre-COVID worship time and location, things will be different. There will be a lot of changes, including new safety protocols, a modified sanctuary layout, and more (see: “Post-Lockdown Changes at Church” on pages 2-3 for details).

This last year has been rough on everyone; we all have been faced with many changes that were out of our control. When things feel out of control we can often react in ways that manifest anger, frustration, anxiety, grief, and a whole host of other emotions. This past year many of us have had to come face to face with how we react to change in our lives. It revealed where we run for comfort in difficult times, as well as what serves as our stability as an anchor amidst seas of change.

As we prepare to return to our building, the Lord laid on my heart the following passage from Hebrews: **“We have this [Hope] as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.”** (Hebrews 6:19-20)

This Hope anchors us in a God who is Himself unchanging. Scripture speaks time and time again about the changelessness of God, and this passage reminds us of the nature of our Hope in God. Anchoring ourselves in a changeless God in a changing world is a powerful thing. Here the writer of Hebrews utilizes a nautical analogy, which is very common in Scripture and in the Church.

This is because in the ancient world, and for the Hebrews, water was often associated as being symbolic of chaos and change. This is why we see so many of Jesus’ miracles depicting His Lordship over water.

I love the image of a boat being stabilized by an anchor amidst an unruly ocean. However, just because a boat has a great stabilizing anchor, that does not mean that those on the boat don’t feel the waves beneath them. A good anchor also does not make those on the boat immune to the motion of the waves making them sick to their stomach from time to time. No, an anchor does not stop the changing nature of the sea from rocking the boat—but it allows those on the boat to be safe from being dashed on rocks or being overcome by the waves. This is a great reminder that we can still become uneasy with change—but if we anchor ourselves in God, we will have the stability to endure it and survive.

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Special Edition: Return to Pershing

Post-Lockdown Changes at Church

Upon returning to worship at the Pershing Avenue location, you will notice changes in our sanctuary that may seem a little strange at first. We made these adjustments to the space for Sunday services with everyone's best interest's at heart. So while there are a few more "dos and don'ts" than before and your favorite chair may no longer be in its usual spot, please be flexible and follow our guidelines.

Masks and social distancing in church is encouraged but not required—parishioners are free to practice either. We will continue to use the colored wrist band system (see below) so people know what you are comfortable with. If you are not able to join us in person, Father Joshua will gladly bring Reserve Sacrament to your home instead.

Bring your Book of Common Prayer (BCP) on Sundays to follow the service. We will only have a limited number of Worship Guides for Visitors and for those who do not yet have a BCP.

Bring your Bible to read the day's Scriptures; only the chanted Psalms and the Gospel reading will be printed. (Or use your favorite Bible app, but please be sure to **silence your phone** if you do. Thank you.)

We will not have ushers handing out bulletins. Instead, there will be a self-serve table with hand sanitizer, wrist bands, and the Sunday bulletin.

We will not use the holy water fonts at the doors for sanitary reasons.

We have rearranged the sanctuary by taking out some chairs, relocating the choir, and creating a bit more space between rows (while still allowing for kneelers to be used).

The hymnals have been removed. All music or hymn texts will be printed in the weekly single-

use bulletins only. This is to ensure everyone's safety and eliminate the need to have to disinfect the hymnals every week.

We will not have an organist but have switched to a *cappella* (unaccompanied) singing. Service music is carefully selected and scheduled several months in advance.

To encourage congregational singing during Communion, there will be *monthly* Communion and post-Communion songs. They will become very familiar to you so that you can sing along without having to *read* along, thus making them more contemplative.

Communion will be "self guided" after the ministers (the altar party and choir) have been served. This means we will not have ushers directing when people can come forward to the Communion rail. With this no-pressure approach, if you want to go earlier or later, or if you haven't finished praying by the time it would be your row's turn (as in the past), you can now get in line whenever you are ready, with your family or by yourself and as socially distanced as you prefer.

Communion will be served with the same health protocols as currently practiced. There will be no shared chalice; the Blood will be placed

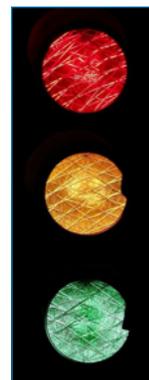
Continued on page 3

Wristband System

RED: no contact, keep 6 feet away

YELLOW: talking is okay, but no touching

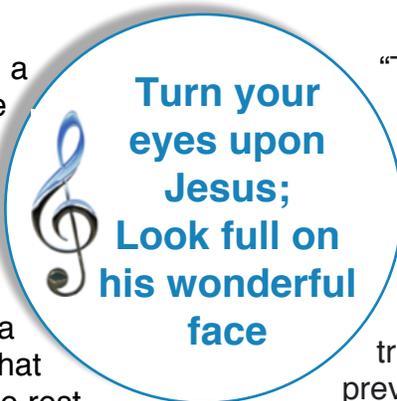
GREEN: talking, touching, hugs are welcome



Special Edition: Return to Pershing

Hope - Cont'd from page 1

The Hope mentioned in Hebrews is a hope that not only anchors us in the stability of God but also leads into His Presence, into the Holy of Holies. The passage says that this hope “enters into the inner place behind the curtain.” The curtain mentioned here is not the curtain in a regular house but the great veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple. Behind the veil of the Temple was the very Presence of God. Here the writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus Christ has gone before us and leads the way for us to boldly go into the Holy of Holies. This living Hope we have in Him leads us beyond the externalities of the material world, plunging us deep into the supernatural reality of the Kingdom of God and the Presence of God. Entering into His Presence has a purifying effect on our priorities and concerns. As the great old hymn states,



“Turn your eyes upon Jesus / Look full in his wonderful face / And the things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of his glory and grace.”

As we become present to the Presence of God we see the triviality of so many things which we previously held dear. When sitting in this Holy Presence, we seldom think about the characteristics of the chair we are sitting on but instead focus on the One we are sitting *with*.

I truly believe that as we return to our building and continue to face the changes that COVID has brought us, we can thrive and not merely survive. But this will only happen if we cling to the living Hope we have in God, the Hope that anchors our souls and allows us to be present to the Presence of God. ♦

Changes - Cont'd from page 2

on the Host with a dropper. You may receive into your cupped hands or on the tongue, in which case Father Joshua will sanitize his hands before serving the next communicant.

Instead of passing the plate during offertory, we will have a basket at the rear of the sanctuary that you can use as you enter or exit the church. Of course you are welcome to continue to give through our PayPal option too.

We will not have Prayer Team during Communion at this time. Sharing prayer requests takes very close proximity for privacy (whispering) and we do not want to endanger our prayer team volunteers.

There is no childcare for the time being. Your little ones are welcome to stay in the sanctuary with you. God loves the little children, and so do we! We hope to restart a newly structured Nursery Ministry soon.

The doors to the courtyard will be open during services to allow fresh air to circulate (unless it is an extremely hot day). If you suffer from allergies or are temperature sensitive you may want to sit further away from the side doors.

To limit the time spent indoors, we will not have Coffee Hour after Mass for a while. We will only provide hot water for tea or coffee and possibly individually sealed snacks; but there will be no open casserole dishes, baked goods, sandwiches, etc. where people would line up to be served. Eventually we would like to get back to our regular Coffee Hour and the Fifth Sunday Potlucks, but this will take some time. We are in the process of restructuring the Hospitality Ministry to make it easier for others to participate in the future. Stay tuned! ♦



Special Edition: Return to Pershing

CHURCH CLEANUP DAY SATURDAY, MAY 22 9:30 AM—1:30 PM

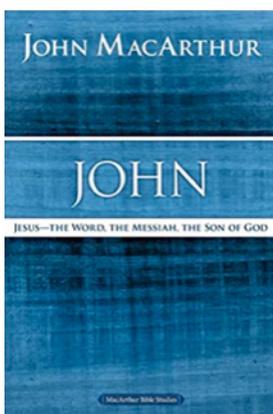
Come help us get the Pershing Avenue location ready for our first Sunday service after a 14-month absence! (Our last service there was March 15, 2020.) We need to sweep, vacuum, dust, disinfect door handles and surfaces, clean up the courtyard, and wipe down the benches. Many hands make light work; we hope to see you there! ♦



Bible Study Fellowship

Sunday afternoons at Mike and Fresca Finney's home in Tracy. We share a meal, watch a video or a movie (currently: Season 2 of *The Chosen*), have Bible study, and close by reading and praying Compline together.

For more information, contact Mike at mikeandfresca [at] yahoo [dot] com. ♦



New Bible Study: JOHN

Every other Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. Location TBA. If possible, this will be a hybrid study in person and on Zoom. Led by Deacon Jeff. **Starts Wednesday, June 2.**

Study guide available on Amazon for \$7.99

<https://www.amazon.com/John-Jesus-Messiah-MacArthur-Studies/dp/0718035046/>

Father Joshua on Vacation 5/04-5/19

Father Joshua and family will be on vacation the first two-and-a-half weeks in May. (*No Church services on 5/09 and 5/16.*) We pray it is a time of rest and refreshment and that the Lord will bring them back to us safely!



For pastoral emergencies while Father Joshua is on vacation, please contact the Diocesan Office in Fresno at

559-244-4828



The 2019 Book of Common Prayer

Available for purchase from Anglican Liturgy Press
<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/index.php/purchase/>



Special Edition: Return to Pershing

To Be or Not to Be: Silent in Church

By Gigi Kemalyan, Editor

Some people complain that there is too much hubbub in the sanctuary before the beginning of Mass. The “cheery greetings, voluble good wishes, and raucous laughter can reach inappropriate levels” (Bill Kassel, Aleteia.org).



There are those who equate silence with reverence and wish to pray quietly in church to prepare for the Eucharist. They may resent the noisy chatterers because to them the time before Mass isn't *social hour*; why do people show such disrespect for *sacred space*?

Then there are those who joyfully (and noisily) greet their brethren in the pews, engaging in conversation seemingly without consideration for those who are trying to pray.

Pre-Mass din is a common complaint in many liturgical parishes, not just our Anglican community. Our loud churches reflect a shift in American culture that is now “dominated by informality at almost every level” (Msgr. Charles Pope). But let me suggest that in Christ's church here on Earth there is room for both silence and socializing.

On Sunday morning you meet with brothers and sisters you may not have seen all week. Engaging with each other is a reflection of our Christian *community*. As Bill Kassel puts it:

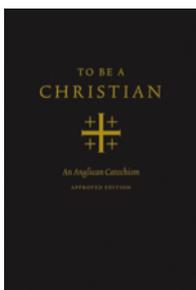
That everyone is present at Mass—and has their presence acknowledged in a visible, social way—expresses mutual support and encouragement. You're telling each other: “Glad to see you...*here*.” This is no small blessing in a time when faith is discouraged by most of society's institutions and [Christianity] is under relentless assault.

After Mass, everyone is on their way someplace else. Before Mass, all are there for the same purpose: to gather *together* to worship and give thanks to God. Our faith is one of *community*.

Can silence and socializing coexist? Both are worthy of respect. So do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Let those who wish to pray in silence be more tolerant (and maybe bring ear plugs). Let those who wish to fellowship be considerate of their brethren who express reverence through silence, and talk more quietly. Once Father Joshua starts the Mass, people settle down anyway. To God be the glory. ♦

Catechism Update

In order to limit the time people spend indoors at church, we will not yet resume in-person Catechesis. We are considering midweek or Saturday Zoom classes in place of Sunday mornings. Stay tuned for details. ♦



New Newsletter Schedule

Until further notice, The Messenger is now published on a quarterly and as-needed basis only. The next issue will come out in late summer. Article submission deadlines will be announced via email. ♦

Special Edition: Return to Pershing

Daily Office on Zoom

We started praying the Daily Office on Zoom in April 2020 to help preserve a sense of community during the physical separation forced on us by the lockdown. It brought together parishioners from Stockton, Lodi, and Tracy.

Fairly soon—as it became clear that this was a great way of maintaining a discipline of daily prayer as well as fostering a sense of community—we decided that when the lockdown finally ended, praying the Daily Office together would not. Morning Prayer and reading the Scriptures in community has not only fostered “Togetherness in Christ” but has strengthened each participant’s individual faith, more so than simply reading and praying on our own ever could.



So now that we are once again allowed to meet in our building, we will continue to have Morning Prayer on Zoom on most weekdays, except for holidays and on the rare occasion when none of the regular leaders is available.

The Zoom log-in info is sent with the weekly Flocknote email on Saturday mornings, so you can quickly find the link and join us weekday mornings at 9:00 a.m.

After reading the Lessons we have a brief discussion on the day’s Scriptures and then finish with intercessory prayer, which can be either extemporaneous or read directly from the Book of Common Prayer—no one is required to pray out loud.

All are welcome to join us for this “Hour of Prayer” weekdays at 9:00 a.m. In the future, as the parish recovers from lockdown attrition, we hope to offer an in-person Morning Prayer service one day a week. But for now the Zoom option will be available as long as the Internet works, Lord willing. ♦

Online Resources



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF SAN JOAQUIN

Our Diocese of San Joaquin Website: <https://www.dioceseofsanjoaquin.net/>

Diocesan Newsletter: <https://www.dioceseofsanjoaquin.net/newsletter.html>

Daily Opportunities to read/hear the Word:

<https://www.dailyoffice2019.com/>

(This is what many of us use for the Daily Office readings on Zoom. Currently available as an app only on iOS. Android users can add a shortcut on their home page.)

<https://crossroadsabbey.podbean.com/#>

<http://www.missionstclare.com/english/>



Special Edition: Return to Pershing

How Can I Keep from Singing?

By Gigi Kemalyan, Music Director

Do you like to sing on Sundays? Or do you only sing in your car or in the shower when no one else is listening? Many churches have difficulties encouraging congregations to sing. While there is a multitude of reasons for the lack of enthusiasm on Sundays, a significant contributing factor is that communal singing is not very common in American culture. This means that many, if not most, of us are literally out of practice.

Singing has been part of Christian worship for over 2000 years.

Our voices are the primary instruments in our corporate worship. In the Anglican tradition we worship the Lord through *Λειτουργία*, *leitourgia* or the *liturgy*, which literally means *the work of the people*. This work is a joy when we love God. As C.S. Lewis wrote, “I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because

the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment...” (*Reflections on the Psalms*)

Singing unites the congregation. On Sundays we gather from different walks of life, carrying various needs, burdens, and complications. Yet when we raise our voices together, we focus on the Lord instead of our individual problems: “in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord...” (2 Chronicles 5:13 NASB)

Singing is a sacrificial act. Every Sunday during the Prayer of Consecration the priest says: “And here we offer and present to you, O

Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice.” (Book of Common Prayer p. 117) We offer ourselves, including our voices, as a spiritual sacrifice to the Lord. Singing is a holy sacrifice involving the entire being—the soul longing for God; the mind comprehending the words; the breath giving them sound.

God Himself rejoices over us with singing.

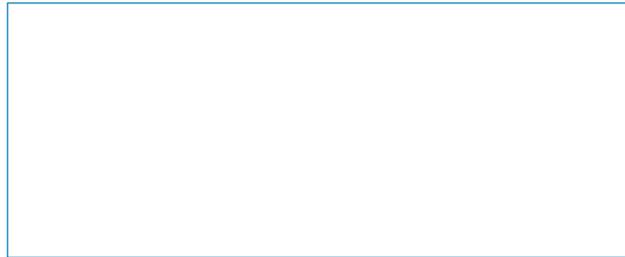
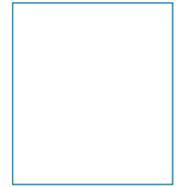
Should we do any less in response? “The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17 NKJV). Some translations even say “loud singing.”

Sing to praise God. He does not *need* our praise, but He is worthy and desiring of it. “I will declare Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” (Hebrews 2:12 NKJV)

Sing to thank God. He is faithful and He loves us! As the old hymn says: How can I keep from singing? “I will thank you in the great congregation: I will praise you among many people.” (Psalm 35:18 NKJV)

Sing to please the Lord. God loves it when we sing praises to Him! “I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.” (Psalm 69:30-31 ESV)

Singing to God is a genuine spiritual expression of love, thanksgiving, and praise. We are blessed to be able to do so freely—just think of our persecuted brothers and sisters who have to worship in secret for fear of being found out. So next time you are in church, offer your sacrifice of praise and make a joyful noise! ♦



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Holy Eucharist

Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Morning Prayer (Zoom)

Every weekday 9:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours

Monday—Thursday by appointment; closed Friday

Dates to Remember

**5/04-19 Father Joshua on Vacation - Church Office Closed
(NO CHURCH on 5/09 and 5/16)**

5/09 Mother's Day

5/20 Final "Live Not By Lies" Book Group 6:00 p.m. (Zoom)

5/22 Church Cleanup Day 9:30 a.m.— 1:30 p.m.

**5/23 First Mass back at Pershing Avenue 10:00 a.m.
Pentecost Day, wear red!**

5/23 Vestry Meeting at 3:00 p.m. (Zoom)

5/31 Memorial Day - Church Office closed

**6/02 JOHN Bible study at 6:00 p.m.
Location TBA**

6/20 Father's Day

