

Saint Paul's R.C. Church

P.O. Box 222, Route 17K • Bullville, NY 10915

Church: (845) 361-3107 • Religious Education Office: (845) 361-5816 • Fax: (845) 361-4201

Website: www.StPaulsBullville.org • Email: o389@archny.org

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Dear Parishioners:

You remain in our thoughts and prayers as we transition from the unprecedented events of 2020 into 2021. What a learning process it has been, and one of the best ways to learn is to listen.

So near the end of last year, we sent out a survey asking you to tell us how we're doing. We have reviewed all of the answers received (Thank you!). We also appreciate those who have reached out directly, providing insight into how you're feeling about St. Paul's handling of the pandemic.

Many of the responses were overwhelmingly positive. There were compliments and suggestions regarding potential areas for improvement. We've prayerfully considered your questions, comments and suggestions and have put together a summary.

We wanted to let you know that prior to being given the opportunity to reopen the church last spring, first for meditation and then for Mass, we established a Reopening Committee that met (and continues to meet) on a regular basis to discuss St. Paul's options and application of the Archdiocesan guidelines. Your health and safety are our priority, as we look to abide by guidelines and continue to support the faith-life of our church family.

General survey highlights:

- 235 responses
- 90 percent of respondents had attended Mass regularly before the pandemic
- 73 percent of the respondents were age 50 and older
- More than half of respondents said they are not attending Mass at this time because they do not want to become ill and/or infect a loved one



Carmelite Friars

Specific concerns and remedies:

- Concern about being turned away because the church is at capacity.
 - This had occurred on several occasions when we began. It was disheartening for all. The Committee decided to open the hall, where the Mass is now streamed and Communion distributed, on Sunday
- Initially entry via the main church was difficult for people with mobility issues.
 - Entry is now through the East Wing.
- Music was missed.
 - We added an organist/pianist. [See below for more information on singing.]
- Discomfort with the tone and/or seeming confusion caused by ushers.
 - Anxiety levels were initially high among volunteers, tasked with ensuring the safety of parishioners, as well as among the parishioners, unsure of what to do. After adjusting to it all, communication has become more relaxed and eye smiles are encouraged. The number of ushers/greeters at each Mass has also been reduced.
- Desire for the live-streaming of Mass.
 - After updating the church Wi-fi services and securing equipment, streaming became possible. All of the Christmas Masses were live-streamed, followed by the Sunday and then Saturday Masses. Please reach out to the church for information on how to watch the Mass live-streamed.

Going forward:

- Attendance: With social-distancing protocols (6 feet in all directions), the number of attendees at Mass has to remain at a maximum of 66 in the church. On Sundays we can have approximately 30 more parishioners Deacon John Hall.
- Ushering: The Archdiocese set a protocol of accompanying those entering and exiting the church, as well as monitoring spacing during Communion. With the challenging L-shape of our church coupled with limited seating to begin with, ushering also ensures we can accommodate as many people as possible, utilizing unique spaces such as the choir area.
- Singing: Singing is very-much universally longed for. The decision to not include singing right now is based on current scientific findings regarding increased aerosol-particle spread when singing, even while wearing masks. With the recommendation being to avoid singing altogether, we ultimately determined we should heed that. We don't want to increase the chance of anyone getting sick and/or our church needing to shut down again. But, oh, how we will joyfully sing in unified praise when we are able!
- Virtual Gathering: We're continuing to explore ways to connect with you. Examples include: our successful Check-In at Church event on Corpus Christi; Zoom meetings; Religious Education,; and Youth Ministry. Holiday endeavors, such as the food baskets and Giving Tree, connected with 185 respondents.

Flocknotes and our website have been somewhat effective in getting out information. We don't want anyone to feel disconnected.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns. We keep all of those enduring the challenges and losses from COVID-19 in our prayers.

To close on a high note, if you have not yet had a chance to see it, please check out the St. Paul's Christmas Greeting that was posted on December 23 - <https://youtu.be/jsyffk75lJk>.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Parish Council
and The Reopening Committee
of St. Paul's R.C. Church