



christ church
frederica

Dear Christ Church,

The global pandemic that we face has already dramatically shaped so much of our common lives. The Church has had to respond and adapt along with the rest of the world. As hard as it was to decide to suspend communal worship, the decision to restart is even harder. We know there are risks associated with any kind of gatherings. Our congregation is made up primarily of persons the CDC considers to be most at-risk for severe illness if infected with the COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 virus. The reopening guidelines that follow are our attempt to balance our spiritual need to be present with one another in Christian community with the very real threat from the continued spread of this virus.

No plan will be perfect, and no response will be able to give us everything we want when we want it. As we are learning, there will be no easy way back from where we are today as this pandemic continues to make people very ill, kills some, and we continue to feel the economic effects of successfully flattening the initial curve. We are choosing to follow recommendations from experts in the medical field and giving their advice more weight than other sources. Our guidelines are intended to be compatible with the Episcopal Diocese of GA's expectations and vetted by local medical professionals. We will take measured steps forward as it is deemed safe and appropriate for our context and comfort level, regardless of what may be taking place in other churches, communities, or states. *Our plans are tentative, and we will amend our plan as needed in response to new or updated information.*

As Christians our first and highest good is to love and care for one another. Church life is never about what we want for ourselves independent of the wants and needs of others. The church is a community in the truest sense, in which we each strive to support the common good of all. This is a particular charism of our Anglican faith and why we pray from the Book of *Common Prayer*. We will model this way of love in all that we do, including our response to this pandemic. We thank you for your understanding, patience, and ongoing support during this time. We all look forward to the day when we can gather for prayer and praise without restrictions. These days of separation and caution are temporary, yet God's promises are lasting, and for that we give thanks.

The Rev. Tom Purdy
Rector

Ms. Beth Smith
Senior Warden

Christ Church, Frederica *Tentative* COVID Pandemic Reopening Plan

STAGE ONE: COPING WITH CRISIS

Until at least July 1* (Our current situation)

Public Health Indicators (PHI): Rates of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths are rising. As of May 26, 2020, after factoring increased testing, cases are again on the rise in Georgia¹. It will take some time in June to see the continuing trend for this data. Because the COVID-19 virus spread is not yet under control, current CDC guidelines call for avoiding groups of any kind whenever possible.

- Church office remains closed to non-essential personnel, and, whenever possible, work takes place from home.
- All staff and visitors to Church properties will sign a logbook and take their temperature with the provided no-touch thermometer.
- All staff and visitors will utilize hand sanitizer stations upon entering a Church property and sanitizing periodically during the course of their work.
- All staff and visitors will wear masks when inside the facility. Everyone is encouraged to have their own masks, however, masks will be made available for those without. Masks may be removed at staff desks so long as the staff person is the only one in their office.
- Congregation continues to hold virtual worship, livestreamed and/or recorded. Only essential personnel are present for service streaming, masks are worn except when speaking, and social distancing is maintained.
- Services will be primarily from the Daily Office (i.e. Sunday Morning Prayer), although Eucharist may be celebrated on Feast Days.
- No live singing will take place in the church.
- After Pentecost Sunday, communion from the reserved sacrament will be distributed to parishioners on their front porches upon request and using a schedule.
- Bible studies, coffee hours, social gatherings, meetings and other small group activities take place via telephone or via online service like Zoom.
- Funerals: Outdoor services of 10 or fewer people observing physical distancing are allowed.
- Weddings that had already been scheduled prior to the pandemic may be held outdoors, socially distanced, with 10 or fewer people.
- Baptisms remain suspended, except by permission of the bishop. [In addition to health concerns, the sacrament of Baptism is most appropriate when the community is gathered together. Without that possibility most baptisms will be delayed. Emergency baptisms are permissible and are included in the Book of Common Prayer. Contact the Rector to discuss baptism during the pandemic.]

¹ <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-daily-status-report>

- Pastoral care largely takes place via telephone or online. Outdoor visitations can be scheduled for urgent pastoral care needs, with clergy and parishioner wearing a mask and socially distanced for the entirety of the visit. Physical contact is currently prohibited. Emergency in-home visitation may occur for needs such as Last Rites. Such visits will require extreme caution and short duration.
- Continued ministries of service and compassion take place within protocols of safety. This includes Backpack Buddies and other Outreach ministries. Protocols including masking, sanitizing, and small groups of workers (less than six).
- Christ Church assesses the economic impact on members of the congregations and wider community, including preliminary adjustments to budgets and ministry goals.
- Christ Church is closed to tour groups and tourists.

STAGE TWO: TURNING THE CORNER

Tentatively beginning on July 1*

PHI: Rates of cases, hospitalizations and deaths are consistently declining. Testing and tracing are available. Sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available.

During this pandemic any gathering carries risk of virus transmission from person to person. We will do our best to responsibly limit risks, especially to those who are considered particularly at-risk. Group sizes have been determined based upon expected CDC recommendations. These guidelines will be amended as those recommendations change (or at the direction of the Bishop of GA change, or local health experts). As long as the CDC recommends at-risk individuals gather in groups of ten or less, that will override any other recommendation or plans. Any service, meeting, or event that is attended by an at-risk individual will automatically limit the group total to the expected limit of 10. If/when the CDC revises that figure, the policy will be revised and communicated as well. Christ Church will offer opportunities that are specifically sized for the safety of at-risk participants. Christ Church may also offer opportunities that are intended only for those deemed not at risk. For reference, the current definition of at-risk is included at the end of this document.

- Church offices may reopen in spaces large enough for physical distancing to be maintained, with the requirement that proper sanitation measures be strictly adhered to and enforced, and with additional ventilation where possible (open doors and windows).
- Staff and visitor logging will continue; masks should continue to be worn indoors. Everyone is encouraged to use their own mask; however, masks will be provided for those without.
- Indoor church worship may restart in spaces large enough for 6 feet of physical distance to be maintained between people from different households.

- Groups including those in a high-risk category should not exceed 10 persons in total.
 - Groups that do not include those in a high-risk category should not exceed 25 persons in total.
- Outdoor worship may be offered with 6 feet of physical distance to be maintained between people from different households.
 - Groups including those in a high-risk category should not exceed 10 persons in total.
 - Groups that do not include those in a high-risk category should not exceed 50 persons in total.
- Total group size for any group includes clergy, staff, or any other leaders.
- Worship will still require use of masks and hand sanitizing stations whether indoor or outdoor.
- There will be no prayer books or hymnals in the pews or on chairs; all liturgy is to be printed on disposable bulletins. Parishioners may also bring their own prayer book from home.
- There will be no in-person congregational singing. A properly distanced soloist or duo may sing.
- Funerals can be held indoors for groups up to 25 in number (following social distancing); 50 if outdoors (following social distancing). Outdoors is preferable. At-risk guidelines may still limit attendance to 10.
- Weddings can be held indoors for groups up to 25 in number (following social distancing); 50 if outdoors (following social distancing). Outdoors is preferable. At-risk guidelines may still limit attendance to 10.
- We will continue to offer virtual worship to accommodate vulnerable persons and/or those who do not want to be a part of gatherings of any size.
- If Holy Eucharist is celebrated in this stage, safe practices will be used. Such practices include limiting physical contact, maintaining social distancing while moving within the worship space, and refraining from sharing the common cup.
- Committees, classes, study groups, and guilds of 15 or fewer people might consider meeting in person while wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing, or they may continue to gather online.
- All health and safety protocols, including cleaning and sanitizing practices, continue. Church will post signs indicating symptoms, urging people to stay home and seek medical attention if they have symptoms, and recommending prescreening at home.
- Pastoral care visits to those in high-risk categories for contracting the virus remains restricted, as do pastoral care visits by clergy and lay visitors in high-risk categories.
- Churches perform next-level assessments of the pandemic's impact on members of the congregation and community, forecast necessary long-term adjustments of ministry initiatives.
- All levels of church leadership need to lead with knowledge and information to help our people cope with the changing nature of the phased community approach our health leaders will be taking.

- Christ Church is closed to most tour groups and tourists. Scheduled tours of persons small enough in number may be considered as long as all other guidelines are followed, including physical distancing, masks, and sanitization practices.

STAGE THREE: LEADING RECOVERY

Date to be Determined*

PHI: Case, hospitalization, and deaths are near zero. Widespread testing and tracing are available. Health care systems have the capacity to manage all in need.

- Restrictions are eased on office and classroom gatherings, within sanitation and ventilation guidelines previously noted in Stage 2.
- An increased number of people are allowed for public worship, according to guidelines set by health officials and in consultation with the bishop's office.
- Restrictive practices may still guide the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, with gradual easing.
- Continued physical distancing and masking requirements are likely.
- Larger group ministries (youth groups, classes) may resume within established guidelines.
- Churches continue assessments of pandemic impact and prayerful discernment of future ministry.
- Christ Church can begin opening to tourists and tour groups in keeping with recommended numbers and practices.

STAGE FOUR: ADAPTING TO A NEW REALITY

This phase will be marked by celebration!

PHI: A vaccine is available to the general public. Treatment of proven effectiveness is widely available, as is widespread testing for the virus. Widespread immunity is present in the community.

- There is no limit to the number of worshipers who may attend worship and other activities, except for those who are known to be infectious, are actively sick or who display any of the symptoms of being ill.
- Although we can gather without limitations, worship and meetings continue both in person and virtually.
- Worshipers may wear masks throughout the service, but masks are not required.
- Restrictions on celebrating the Holy Eucharist are lifted.
- Widespread pastoral care is offered.

- Emergency preparedness plans and strategies are in place.
- We move forward with the new practices and ways of doing church that proved fruitful during the pandemic, including:
 - Increased online giving as well as in-person offerings;
 - Fruitful collaborative endeavors;
 - Right-sizing of building use and capacities to meet a growing mission field;
 - Streamlined, efficient use of financial and other resources; and
 - Strategic efforts toward the realization of key strategic missions, visions and goals

CDC Guidance on At-Risk Individuals:

“Based on what we know now, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are:

- *People 65 years and older*
- *People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility*

People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:

- *People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma*
- *People who have serious heart conditions*
- *People who are immunocompromised*
 - *Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications*
- *People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)*
- *People with diabetes*
- *People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis*
- *People with liver disease”*