

Following are the updates to the Covid-19 guidelines announced in the August 20th newsletter, which can be found [here](#).

As of October 1st, Austin is in ["Stage 3"](#) of its COVID Risk-Based Guidelines. In accordance with the guidelines set by the city, Saint John's will be taking steps to ensure the health and wellness of our community while finding alternative ways to be in fellowship with one another. We will not meet in the building for the remainder of the year.

Our protocols remain the same until the City of Austin gets to ["Stage 2,"](#) then, staff will begin to plan gatherings of groups of less than 10 to meet outside. This decision was discerned by the COVID Task Force because we want to remain as safe as possible for all ages and risk levels.

To keep everyone informed, what follows is a detailed list of guidelines that Saint John's will be following:

Church Events and Meetings:

There will be no meetings in the church buildings for the remainder of the year. Drive-by events will be permitted, and participants should remain in their cars. Scheduled outdoor activities will also be permitted. One household at a time can sign up on the event page to be at the church at their designated time.

We will now offer baptisms to families that are interested. This will be done in an outdoor, safe, socially distanced way, and recorded for worship.

For the purposes of recording worship services, church staff, front desk volunteers, invited liturgists, and musicians will be allowed in the building for a limited time with no more than 10 people at one time. Masks will be worn when possible and persons will always remain 6 or more feet apart. For events, staff will take the lead on distribution and in-person needs.

Food Distribution:

If a group or event decides to distribute food, they may do so long as the food is individually wrapped. Food may also be homemade instead of store bought.

Here are the steps the FDA recommends you take while handling and cooking food:

Wash your hands. Since coronavirus can live on surfaces, it is important to practice proper hand washing before, during and after food preparation, as well as before you eat.

Wash your produce. There are many unknowns when it comes to how long coronavirus can live on food. Regardless, you should always [thoroughly wash your produce](#) with water before cooking it or eating it raw.

Clean the surfaces in your kitchen. Regularly disinfect commonly touched surfaces in your kitchen, including counter tops and cabinet knobs, using an EPA-registered household disinfectant, [a diluted bleach solution](#) or an alcohol-based solution that's at least 70% alcohol.

Make sure your food is fully cooked. Most viruses are sensitive to the high temperatures used while cooking. Make sure you're following the [minimum cooking temperatures](#) for meat, poultry and other cooked foods.

Don't prepare food if you're sick. If you're sick, and especially if you're showing symptoms, it's best to avoid preparing food for other people.

Food prepared at home to be distributed to church members must also be individually wrapped. Food handlers should wear a mask, wash their hands and wear food handling gloves.

Classes and Other Events

We encourage the Saint John's congregation to have classes and events online. If there is an event or class that leaders would like to have an in-person component, the event must be approved by a Saint John's staff member and follow all guidelines detailed here. The staff member will also be encouraged to attend the event to enforce guidelines if necessary. If there are outdoor events for individual households, online sign-ups for allotted times will be required.

Participants must follow state, county, and city guidelines which include, but are not limited to:

- Mask wearing at all times outside the home
- Washing hands often
- No gatherings (indoor or outdoor) of over 10 people
- A safe 6-foot distance from other people at all times
- Encouragement of online meetings

Future Updates

The COVID-19 task force will meet on Zoom the first Thursday of each month to re-evaluate the guidelines and possibly make changes based on the most up-to-date information. These updates will be communicated to the congregation in the newsletter. If you are not subscribed to the newsletter, you can sign up [here](#). Saint John's staff who are a part of the task force will communicate any changes as necessary to small group leaders and other staff members.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please reach out to the COVID-19 Task Force through Duane Roth, Business Administrator, or Hilary Marchbanks, Senior Pastor.