

# St. Thomas Episcopal Church

## General Guidelines for in-person worship indoors to begin on Sunday, November 1, 2020 *Amended November 16, 2020*

We are in uncharted waters and are trying to regather indoors as a church on Sunday mornings. We will continue to be a welcoming community of faith and love that serves one another and seeks to draw others to God through our ministries

The on-line worship option will continue for those who will not attend or who are not ready to attend in-person worship services at this time. We also plan to offer an outdoor Eucharist (per our previously approved plans) on Sunday mornings for a trial over the month of November as an alternative in person gathering.

### Reservation Process:

Reservation can be made on line at Signup Genius (<https://www.signupgenius.com>) or call the church office to make a reservation with Frances (912) 355-3110.

45 Reservations will be taken per indoor service. Once the 45 cap is met, a waiting list will be created. Any one on the wait list will be automatically added to the following week's service reservation. See attached church layout.

Reservations will start on Mondays at 12pm and will close on Thursdays at 3pm (with the exception of the week of November 1<sup>st</sup>).

Reservation system is the best way to provide information for contact tracing if needed.

### Check-in procedures:

Items needed: table, chair, reservation list, pens, thermometer, copies of covenant, extra masks, cleaning wipes and hand sanitizer

- Ushers (Vestry members and others invited to this ministry) will arrive 30 minutes prior to the service.
- Attendees will not be allowed admission to the church until 15 minutes prior to service time.
- All attendees must check in **at front door** and temperatures of all will be taken. (We'll put signs on other doors to please use the front door.)
- All attendees must wear a mask at all times upon entering the church except when receiving communion. Mask must cover nose and mouth while inside the church.
- Covenant has been signed. If reservations have been made online, then the covenant is a part of that process. We'll need one signed copy of the

covenant per person on file at the church office, so this only needs to be done at their first in person service.

- Hand sanitizers available at check-in. Please use the sanitizer entering and exiting the church. We encourage people to bring their own.
- Initially, a seating chart will be created on Friday before the service on Sunday. This is to ensure a smooth transition back into in-person worship.
- Walk-ins are allowed if capacity has not been met.

Church doors will be propped open before the start of the service and will be closed once the service has begun. No one is allowed to enter the church once the service has started. An usher will remain near the door to stop any late comers from entering.

Ushers will seat worshipers in every other pew and family groups will social distance from the other groups. Please note that you may not be able to sit in "Your Pew"

Paper bulletins with the order of service will be distributed. All prayer books and hymnals will be removed for the church.

There will be NO procession or recession at the beginning or at the end of the service. Officiants will enter and exit through the Sacristy.

### **Signage**

Some people have a good mental picture of what six feet looks like; other struggle with that. Clear, direct signage and heavy duty duct tape will be used to remind people about social distancing and help them with the proper spacing.

### **Rest Rooms**

Rest Rooms are opened in the parish hall and are limited to one person at a time to allow for social distance in case of emergencies. The most thoughtful advice suggests that individuals be encouraged in advanced to come to worship having already used their bathrooms at home.

### **Music and Singing**

Organ can be played, but no singing from the congregation. Cantor or soloist can sing if appropriately distanced from others.

### **Offertory Plate**

Offertory plate will not be passed during the service. It will be placed on a table in the narthex to receive offerings.

### **Passing the Peace**

This will be a hard one for us! NO physical contact will be made outside family groups. Waving or flashing "V" sign is appropriate when passing the peace.

### **Communion guidelines:**

Ushers will direct communicants by rows to receive communion or a blessing starting at the front of the church.

Communicants will form a single file line to receive by using the center aisle at the base of the stairs and return to their seats via side aisles. Face masks are required when you come forward to receive communion. You may consume your consecrated host in your seat or at the communion station under your mask. The Celebrant will wear a mask during communion and will wash her hands thoroughly with hot water at the offertory while the Deacon sets the table. Communicants are asked to keep their hands as flat as possible when receiving communion to help the Celebrant avoid cross contamination. If cross-contamination does occur, the Deacon will step in to administer communion.

Only the consecrated bread will be distributed.

### **Dismissal at end of service**

Usher will release pews one at a time starting at the back of the church to ensure aisles and exits do not become crowded as people leave the church. Worshipers are discouraged from congregating after the conclusion of the service. Melanie and Aimee will be NOT be at the door to greet you as you leave the church so as not to impede the flow of traffic.

### **Coffee Hour**

There will be NO coffee hour at the conclusion of the service at this time.

### **Nursery**

Child care will NOT be provided in the nursery during the service at this time.

### **Cleaning and Preparing Church Physical Space**

Safely regathering will require ongoing intensified cleaning protocols.

Follow the Centers for Disease Control guidance

Use cleaning wipes on all surfaces, with special attention to frequently-touched surfaces such as door knobs and light switches.

Use each cleaning wipe only once before discarding.

Ensure that adequate personal hygiene supplies (soap, paper towels, tissues, and sanitizer) are readily available.

Verify that Nicole has been trained in intensified cleaning procedures. Be sure she is fully equipped with approved cleaning products, rubber gloves, hand sanitizer, and that all wear masks while cleaning.

Check with Nicole on her availability to sanitize before and after services.

### **Work in Progress**

We are very excited to resume in-person worship at St. Thomas. There are guidelines mandated from the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia and the Georgia Department of Health that we must adhere to. These guidelines are based on information from the CDC and Emory University. Your safety and wellbeing is our number one priority. We ask that if you cannot follow the guidelines or do not feel well, please stay at home.

### **When to Stop In-person worship**

There are three key metrics from the Coastal Health Department that monitored the current COVID-19 activity levels in Chatham County. They are as follows;

Daily Case Rate per 100k

<https://covid19.gachd.org/daily-case-rate-per-100000/>

14-day community Transmission

<https://covid19.gachd.org/community-transmission-index/>

Percentage of Positive test

<https://covid19.gachd.org/percentage-of-positive-tests/>

When any 2 of the 3 metrics approaches the unsafe red level, all in-person will cease until levels return to the safer levels.

### **Notes for Ushers**

People may have great difficulty with social distancing. When we have been apart from loved ones, and experienced the stress and grief of isolation, it's easy to ignore guidelines.

The best help for those who struggle with distancing is by example. Leaders and clergy can show by waves, smiles, peace-signs, bowing with hands together, that we can acknowledge one another's presence without breaking the principle of distancing.

Most every faith community has a few respected pillars who help set the tone and shape congregational culture. Recruit those people to be ushers.

- Their job is to be present at public worship and monitor conformance with the safety precautions in effect.
- They can do so firmly, kindly and tactfully.
- Help them by creating specific job descriptions that articulate where they are to be, what they will do, and what resources to use.
- Designating them in advance, referring to their ministry as safe-keeping the Body of Christ, enables them to act with authority when necessary.

These ushers may take the opportunity to privately suggest that people continue to worship virtually if they are unable to observe safe practices for in-

person worship because they lack impulse control, are cognitively confused, or seriously emotionally impacted and thus unable to self-regulate.

Some people who have been sustained by hope for “worship back to normal” may be deeply disappointed by the distance restrictions, the absence of singing, the avoidance of hugs and handshakes, and the regimentation of “crowd control”. Nothing will be back to “normal” for quite a while.