



**REGATHERING PLAN:
policies and procedures for hybrid services
for St. James' Episcopal Church, Clinton, New York,
during the ongoing covid-19 pandemic**

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This document is the planning guide for hybrid services at St. James' Episcopal Church, Clinton, New York. It is the result of the collaborative work of the clergy, vestry and regathering committee. It is grounded in prayer, guided by our Lord Jesus Christ's command to welcome all—being mindful of the most vulnerable— and our firm belief that worship is the work of the community, both of the clergy and of the lay people, to honor God in all things.

This planning guide was developed by the Regathering Committee and approved by the vestry on Wednesday, April 21, 2021. It is our great desire to gather together in community, which encompasses those who join in-person within our church building and those who join through Zoom and other electronic or telephone connections. We move towards a “hybrid” mode. As the coronavirus situation continues to evolve, the landscape continues to shift. We will adapt, guided by the requirements of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York, recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal and New York State public health authorities, and on our own local situation. This document will be updated to reflect the changes. **We will make our way together as a people of God.**

The main points will be communicated during the announcements time at the services, namely the date and time of the next hybrid service, when people can sign up, and the requirements. The current requirements are masking at all times, 6 ft distancing between households, and Holy Communion offered by host only, with no singing, no coffee hour or gathering of the community before or after the service.

Communication will appear in the weekly e-newsletter and the homepage of the St. James website (see Appendix A). A letter will be sent by mail to all those on our parish mailing list. An article will also appear in the May 2021 newsletter. We encourage those on our telephone tree outreach ministry to inform parish members of our plan, and to especially invite those who, being unable to attend our Zoom services, have expressed particular interest in on-site, in-person worship.

This full document will be posted on our website. The weekly e-newsletter will have a link to this document. The document will also be in a binder in the back of the church along with the St. James' Covenant of Gathering Anew with the Diocese of Central New York, the most current COVID-19 Response Guidelines for the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York, and NY Forward Safety Plan filed by St. James' with the State of New York.

The Church has never closed: only the building

When will St. James' reopen for worship?

Our sanctuary remained open for private meditation and prayer throughout the pandemic. **We now aim for in-person (hybrid) worship by mid-May 2021.** Currently, the six foot distancing between different households remains, regardless of vaccination status, so we will need to limit the number of people onsite. Depending on the trajectory of COVID case numbers, the numbers attending the in-person, on-site worship will continue or increase in the next months, or on-site services may need to pause for a period of time.

Episcopalians are called to Common Prayer; we journey together.

Will Zoom worship continue?

Yes, it will! A blessing of Zoom and live-stream is that St. James' parish members who are out of town, who have limited transport or mobility, or special concerns about regathering, can join us. Finally, Zoom allows St. James' to welcome those visiting from afar, and offers the opportunity for others to "check out" our community and corporate worship. Zoom may be a part of our new mission field.

Church services will be different, but, as we are able, all to the glory of God.

Our services will be either by Zoom only (as we have been doing) or hybrid. Hybrid services mean some of us will worship and celebrate Eucharist in the church building, while others of us worship through Zoom (or live-stream).

For the next several months, as we adapt, we plan for rotations:

First weekend of the month:

Saturday 4:00 pm by Zoom only

Sunday 9:30 am hybrid

Second weekend of the month:

Saturday 4:00 pm hybrid

Sunday 9:30 am by Zoom only

Third weekend of the month:

Saturday 4:00 pm by Zoom only

Sunday 9:30 am hybrid

Fourth weekend of the month

Saturday 4:00 pm hybrid

Sunday 9:30 am by Zoom only

Fifth weekends (TBD)

For weekends when Fr. John Crosswaite is not our worship leader, we offer morning and evening prayer services by Zoom only.

We are also exploring the option of a few outdoor summer services at the Kirkland Town Park (pavilion #3) or at St. Margaret's Ecumenical & Retreat Center ("St. Margaret's House") in New Hartford.

As the pandemic diminishes and restrictions ease, our ability to have hybrid services on both Saturday and Sunday may be limited by the number of volunteers. Please see below for more information on our need for hospitality ushers, digital ushers and Zoom hosts, and how you can sign up to help.

This pew is reserved for you

A limited number of people will be able to register each week to participate in the on-site liturgy.

The narrowness of our sanctuary means the physical distance requirement determines our capacity. We estimate being able to accommodate the mid to high 20s, a number which includes clergy, any on-site readers, and the hospitality and digital ushers. The exact number depends on the distribution of members in a household.

Sign-up for each service will be available on the preceding Monday morning. There will be a simple on-line form. Those who prefer can call the church office (315 853 5359) and leave a message (name, number attending). Reservations will be taken only for that week's hybrid service.

One person per household should register all those from their household that plan to attend. Those who have attended an in-person service in the last two weeks are asked to wait until Wednesday to sign up to allow others the opportunity. Confirmation of registration will be sent. Those on the waiting list will be informed when a space opens up. **Persons who have reservations but are unable to attend should let the church office know as soon as possible.**

Who can come?

All are welcome! However, those with any symptoms of COVID-19, or who have recently tested positive for COVID-19, or been in close contact with someone who has tested positive *must* stay home to protect others and take care of themselves. If you are a person in a high-risk group or have any misgivings about gathering at this time, please join us by Zoom; worshipping by Zoom affords a full measure of grace! Also, given the Diocesan restriction on singing in the church, if you can't bear the thought of attending a service without singing, you may prefer to attend via Zoom.

At this time, we are not offering church school, or other formation, community or social gatherings on the church premises. Children are welcome to join us for worship in the pew with their household.

What about vaccination status?

We urge everyone eligible to be vaccinated. However, we will **NOT** require people to be vaccinated in order to attend in-person worship. In keeping with the Episcopal Church's tenant to welcome all, and for privacy and legal reasons, we will not check vaccination status. There may be folks for whom vaccination is not medically safe. The currently available COVID-19 vaccines have been approved under the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and are not required by either New York State or the Diocese of Central New York.

"The Episcopal Church has long maintained that we are guided by faith and reason, and that scientific evidence helps us to better understand God's creation, our place in it, and ways to alleviate suffering and pain...The proper and responsible use of vaccines is a duty not only to our own selves and families but to our communities. Choosing to not vaccinate, when it is medically safe, threatens the lives of others."

- Executive Council of The Episcopal Church

About worship in the hybrid mode: What can I expect?

Masks

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'...And 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
Matthew 22:37-40.

All in attendance over the age of two years must be masked for the entire time while on the St. James campus (including outside). No exceptions. This is a Diocesan requirement. "Gaiters" or masks with vents or valves are not permitted. Masks must completely cover both mouth and nose. Disposable masks will be available anyone who needs one. Masks are for others' safety, as well as the person wearing it. Except when receiving the host, those needing to remove their mask should step outside to do so and apply hand sanitizer after putting your mask back on.

Sermons and homilies can be delivered unmasked, with care taken for physical distancing. *Currently*, those reading scripture or prayers (lay readers) will remain masked if reading from the church, per Diocesan guidelines.

As a caring parish guided by the example of God's love, we rely on everyone's' Christian duty to love one another and on their civic responsibility to follow all of the COVID public health guidelines, which include masking, and physical distancing.

The Guidelines will be clearly posted in the church building, be communicated when people sign up to attend a service in-person, on-site, and be included in the order of worship service bulletin. The on-line sign-up form will include a check-box to attest that all members of the household that are attending understand the masking, and physical distancing requirement.

Welcome

The Hospitality Usher will welcome in-person worshippers, ask some health questions related to COVID, and help people find their assigned pew. Pews will be marked for each household group to facilitate the required physical distancing. There will also be markers indicating 6 ft distances to act as visual guides. We ask for understanding in terms of where people are seated. Once seated, everyone must stay in their pew. Worshippers should arrive early enough so everyone can be seated in time for the start of the service. It may take more time to get everyone seated, given the social distancing requirements and need to answer the health questions.

All attendance records, responses to the health questions and seating charts will be kept by the church administrative assistant in a secure location for a period of time if needed for contact tracing.

Worship bulletin

The printed order of service will be distributed to those worshipping in person. These should be taken home, rather than left in the pew or placed in the recycle bins in the building. During the celebration of the Eucharist, our current plan is to spotlight the priest at the altar with no Zoom slides; the responses will be in the Zoom chat, or be made available to those worshipping through Zoom by some other means. A link to the order of service will be included in the weekly e-mail reminder of the Zoom services, and posted on our website. We also encourage those joining by Zoom to use a copy of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). The BCP may be borrowed from the church for the duration of the pandemic; contact the church office.

About worship in the hybrid mode (continued)

The liturgy

Recorded music offered by our Minister of Music, Richard Lloyd, and the St. James' choir will be played during the Sunday services for both those onsite and on Zoom. Singing by in-person congregants remains prohibited; silent meditation of the words during hymns is suggested.

Lectors can read the Word and prayers either from home using their own Zoom microphone, or at the church lectern while masked. Full participation in worship is available for all.

The offering plate will not be passed. Gifts of offering given electronically through [tithely](https://tithely.com) or through mailed check are encouraged. There will be a slotted box in the back of the church for those preferring to bring their offerings of money and prayers with them.

The Peace will be shared, in place, with a bow, wave, nod or similar; no physical contact outside households.

Those in the church building will receive the Eucharist in bread (hosts), but not the wine at this time. The Presider will give specific instructions for safely coming forward to receive. Per Diocesan guidelines, congregants will return to their pew before consuming the host.

Eucharist "to go" (distributing bread without participation in a community Eucharist) and "Virtual Communion" (such as a minister "blessing" bread and wine through a phone or internet connection) are prohibited by the Diocese.

The sending out of the community

At dismissal, worshippers are asked to leave in an orderly fashion through the main doors, keeping physical distance between households. Persons are not to linger in the building, in the parking lot or other areas of the St. James property. There is no in-person Coffee Hour, or in-person social gathering of the community.

Zoom coffee hour will continue. Those leaving the in-person service are encouraged to use personal mobile devices to connect by Zoom once in their cars or in another safe manner once off the church property. As we learn how to navigate hybrid services, we may be able to offer other ways to connect electronically for post service gatherings, dependent on Diocesan guidelines.

Only staff, and essential volunteers (i.e. finance or those preparing the altar for Eucharist) and groups that have a Covenant of Building Use with the wardens and vestry- such as the St. James' Day School-are permitted in the parish hall wing. Per Diocesan guidelines, vestry meetings, church committees, formation groups continue to meet by Zoom or similar means for now.

Go forth into the world in with Shalom; be of good courage; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:13, 14

Other

How can I help?

Hybrid services are personnel intensive. For each service, we need three volunteers; (1) a hospitality usher to welcome people at the door, ask COVID-related questions and help people find their assigned pew, (2) an on-site digital usher who works the digital camera, sound system and live-stream computer, and (3) an off-site Zoom host. We also need someone to help prepare the altar and clean up the Eucharistic items afterwards; traditionally this would be an altar guild member but anyone can volunteer. We can always use lectors who read the scripture lessons; they can serve either in person or through Zoom. Contact Karen Anderson or the church office if you can help. Training is provided. (We will not need a Lay Eucharistic Minister until we can share Eucharist wine.)

When can we have both services in the church every week?

We are starting slowly and cautiously to insure the safety of all, while looking for ways to include all persons. We will also need time to address any digital hiccups that arise. Once a week on-site services ensure that the space will be cleaned and sanitized fully between each gathering; we anticipate less time will be required once our Sexton and any cleaning volunteers get into a routine.

Additionally, each hybrid service needs three volunteers. To hold both Saturday and Sunday services each week, we need to expand our volunteer pool. **You can help!** See above.

When can we sing in the church building?

Once the Diocesan office allows congregational or group singing, our priest and Minister of Music, in consultation with the Wardens, will determine when and how we have live (in-person) instrumental and vocal music. We may also need time to adjust our A/V equipment to insure high quality sound for all. Those attending in-person will be informed in advance if solo, choral or congregational singing from the sanctuary will be part of the service.

Will toileting facilities be available?

The uni-sex facility located directly off the choir robing area will be available while the building is open for worship service, one person at a time, for emergency use. The rest of the building remains closed. Sanitizing wipes will be available. "No-touch" soap dispensers have been installed. We ask that each person wipe down high-touch surfaces after use. Our Sexton will continue to fully clean and disinfect the area after the in-person services.

What about sanitizing and cleaning?

Multiple no-touch dispensers for hand sanitizing solution (70% or greater solution of isopropanol or ethanol) have been installed. Worshipers are encouraged to sanitize their hands upon entering and when leaving the church building. The sanctuary will be sanitized/disinfected before and after each in-person worship service. High touch items such as light switches and door handles continue to be disinfected by our Sexton on a regular basis.

We use products on the EPA N-list that are approved for COVID-19 disinfection. These include solutions of isopropanol (2-propanol) or ethanol (ethyl alcohol) of at least 70% concentration, chlorine bleach solutions (concentration 600-800 ppm), and CleanSMART In-cide v.5, a food grade sanitizer. These products are used following appropriate dwell time (i.e. remain on the surface the recommended time to be effective.

Does St. James use special air filters or other devices to increase air exchange?

Our building is more than 150 years old, and is in the Clinton Historical District. Installing air conditioning or specialized HVAC systems is not feasible at this time. In addition, some studies indicate that air conditioning without very careful consideration of location and air flow may make things worse by blowing air onto people rather than outside.

Our Sexton faithfully opens windows throughout the week to insure air exchange. Weather permitting, windows and doors will be propped open to facilitate ventilation.

I have heard about foggers. Will St. James use these?

The most current CDC guidelines indicate foggers (also known as sanitization misters) are not needed, except in health care and nursing home situations. The virus spreads by air-borne means. Transmission by surface contact is very low, and the cleaning indicated above follows current CDC guidelines and the scientific literature.

What about UV sanitation?

High intensity UV light must shine directly on the surface for a period of time, so this method is less useful for our worship spaces. Growing knowledge of the coronavirus suggests UV disinfection seems less effective than good airflow for public spaces.

What other building use can occur?

The vestry, St. James' committees and all other St. James' and community groups will continue to meet by Zoom only, until further notice. In-person, on-site meetings in the clergy's St. James study (aka St. James office) between the clergy and members of a single household unit are solely at the discretion and decision of the clergy.

Only the sanctuary is open at this time to the general community. The upper level of the parish hall is open to essential staff and volunteers only. The lower level of the parish hall is used by the St. James' Day School, an essential community need and a longstanding outreach of St. James Episcopal Church.

The Alcohol Anonymous (AA) groups, another essential outreach ministry as defined by the Diocese and who have had a decade long relationship with the St. James' parish, indicate they are waiting for a loosening of the COVID restrictions before resuming in our church building. St. James parish looks forward to the time when we can invite the AA and other community groups into our building.

We hope to open up to more groups later in the year; per Diocesan guidance all groups will need to enter a Covenant of Building Use. Contact the Wardens or a member of the Regathering Committee to learn more.

What if local conditions with the virus get worse?

We will monitor local COVID-19 conditions weekly and follow guidelines from New York State and the Bishop's office. If we need to cancel in-person worship services, those scheduled to attend will be notified by e-mail and/or telephone. We will communicate this on our website and facebook page. Longer pauses will also be communicated through our weekly newsletter. It is entirely possible that there will be a series of reopening/re-closings in this pandemic time, as conditions warrant.

If you would like to receive weekly news communication from St. James, contact the church office at office@stjamesclinton or by voice message at our telephone number 315 853 5359.

Resources

CDC COVID-19: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility: Every Day and When Someone is Sick
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html#anchor_1617548426741 Updated Apr. 5, 2021

Diocese of Central New York. "FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS,"
<https://cnyepiscopal.org/covid-19/>

"Has the Era of Overzealous Cleaning Finally Come to an End?" by Emily Anthes. New York Times, April 8, 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/health/coronavirus-hygiene-cleaning-surfaces.html?>

"New York Forward: Percentage Positive Results By Region Dashboard,"
<https://forward.ny.gov/percentage-positive-results-region-dashboard>

"See Covid-19 Exposure Risk in Your County and a Guide for Daily Life Near You," by Eleanor Lutz, Aliza Aufrechtig, Charlie Smart, Albert Sun, Rich Harris and Gabriel Gianordoli, updated regularly
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/covid-risk-map.html>

Clergy: The Rev. John Crosswaite

Wardens: Karen Anderson and Kathy Collett,

Members of the Vestry: Mike Baldwin, John Crossley, Joanne Gilles, Blair Jones, Patricia Jue, Kate Marquardt, Raymond Morse, Mary Seyse

Members of the regathering committee: Karen Anderson, David Hermann, Ted Johnson, Mark Linderman, Patricia Jue (chair), Kate Marquardt.