

SAINT STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH RETURNING TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP

On Wednesday, April 22, 2020 Governor Bullock published a plan for reopening Montana. In that document, it was announced that places of worship could begin functioning publicly again on Sunday, April 26. However, our bishop has stated that we should follow the regulations for restaurants since we too feed the people, spiritually. Restaurants are not allowed to operate until Monday, May 4 and only if they follow strict guidelines. Those will be the ones that the Episcopal Diocese of Montana will follow, as well. At St. Stephen's, we will follow the phases of reopening as directed by our bishop, the state of Montana and health officials in Yellowstone County. It is unknown how long each phase will last.

The following guidelines will be observed until further notice:

- Everyone will be asked to wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently (will be provided)
- Our office will not resume normal operations until Phase III
- We ask that people who feel ill, have a fever, or have been in close contact with someone ill recently to not come inside the building
- All commonly touched surfaces must be sanitized before and after all meetings and services, and this will be documented
- Ushers will keep a list of those in attendance at in-person worship in case of infection and the need to trace contacts
- All liturgies will be live streamed and uploaded to YouTube, Facebook and our website so that vulnerable populations can still participate

PHASE I

The following guidelines will be followed during Phase I of our return to in-person worship:

- Family members from the same household can sit together, but people from other households should be spaced out at least six feet in all directions
- **Everyone** needs to wear a mask that covers the mouth and nose throughout worship services to minimize possible spread of the virus
- No physical contact with people outside of your household
- Vulnerable individuals are strongly encouraged to not participate in in-person worship during Phase I or Phase II.

The state of Montana defines vulnerable individuals as the following:

- People over 65 years of age **and/or**
 - Those with serious underlying health conditions: including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.
- We will only use the larger church space during Phase I and Phase II to allow for adequate space between households

PHASE II

TBD

Phase One: Reopening Places of Worship

Following these guidelines for faith-based organizations will help protect your community:

Avoid Spreading Germs

Communicate the importance of personal hygiene.

Washing hands, not touching your face, and coughing or sneezing into a tissue or shirt sleeve are critically important. Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, soap and water, and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Encourage congregants to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and stay home if they have symptoms.

Encourage everyone to wear a face covering.

Encourage everyone to wash their hands as they enter.



Singing, chanting, call and response, and choirs,

are activities that are more likely to distribute viral droplets into the air and transmit the virus to others. It is highly recommended that if you participate in these activities that all singers, leaders and congregants wear a mask.

Encourage congregants to use their own personal Bible from home, if necessary.

Do not allow people to place personal items in shared spaces, such as coat rooms.

Clean & disinfect frequently.

Routinely clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces such as handrails, door handles, pews, chair arms, bathrooms and other shared spaces. Use an [EPA-registered disinfectant](#) or a bleach solution of 4 teaspoons bleach to one quart water.



Increase ventilation of outside air.

In place of hymnals and Bibles, consider using paper handouts containing portions of the liturgy, which can be taken home or disposed of after services.

Remove items that are commonly shared, such as bulletins, newsletters and hymnals.

Find more info at: [CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators and Leaders of Community and Faith-based Organizations](#) and [OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)



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Maintain Physical Distancing

Limit the people

attending a service to maintain a 6 foot distance, or more, between family groups. You may need to block off one or two empty rows between groups.



Modify communion practices so that people maintain physical distance in line, and avoid receiving communion from a common tray or cup.

Discourage sharing of food or beverages after services.

Modify the collection of offerings by using a stationary box, mail, or other electronic methods instead of passing a tray or basket.

Cancel non-essential gatherings, such as fellowship gatherings, Sunday school and childcare during services.

Add services to help maintain physical distance while accommodating worshippers.

Protect vulnerable members by encouraging people over 65 or with chronic health concerns to stay home.

Continue to provide live streaming services, or other opportunities to worship from home.

Discourage handshakes, hugs, holding hands, or other practices that require close contact with others.



Communicate with Staff & Congregants

Assign a key person to manage COVID-19 issues within your organization.

Require employees to stay home if they are sick. Leave policies should be flexible and non-punitive. They should also account for employees who must stay home with their children or sick family members.

Post signs in common areas to remind people of the steps you are taking to help keep them safe.

Remind everyone that actions we take today will protect us in the future.