

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, St. Paul MN

Re-opening Plan

Updated and Edited, June 17, 2021

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church will begin in-person worship services in our worship space following the guidelines set forth below. These guidelines pertain to everyone who worships at St. Matthew's, whether they are vaccinated or not. Our plans are to reopen slowly, beginning with a small mid-week service. We will monitor both the state and Ramsey County test positivity rates. As set forth by the Episcopal Church in Minnesota (ECMN) we will worship in-person indoors only if the state and county positivity rates are at or below 5%.

We are confident in our ability to maintain a strict six-foot social distance in our church's Nave, with each person or family unit having their own pew. There will be an empty pew between each household. The service will be limited to fifteen people and will include communion. There will be no choir.

Contact Tracing

- Mid-week (non-Sunday) building access: All people who enter and exit the building must sign in at the Chelmsford door, leaving an email address.
 - If a positive case of Covid-19 is confirmed in any visitor to the building, all people who have accessed the building within 24 hours of this individual will be notified of possible exposure by email.
- Sunday and Worship Service Contact Tracing:
 - If any individual who was in the building to prepare for Sunday outdoor worship tests positive for Covid-19, the staff will notify the entire leadership teams involved (ie, Verger team, Music team) via email.
- Individuals who test positive will be kept confidential.

Staying Home When Sick

- Clergy and parishioners will be encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before participating in worship.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that people with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.
- Individuals who experience COVID-19 related symptoms, regardless of vaccination status (e.g., fully vaccinated or partially vaccinated), should get tested and stay home away from others. These symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- Fever or chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Social Distancing, Face Coverings, and Hand Hygiene

Social Distancing

- When people arrive at St. Matthew's, they will maintain a distance of six feet from other individuals and households.
- Individuals will be required to physically distance themselves from others at all times when they are in the building and when they exit the facility.
- Only individuals from the same household will be allowed to sit together.
- Markings and/or decals will be placed on the floors to facilitate social distancing by indicating where individuals can sit or stand.
- Handshakes, kisses, or hugs among individuals from different households will be discouraged during all services and all times within the building.

Face Coverings

- Individuals are required to wear a well-fitted mask that covers their nose, mouth, and chin before entering the building.
- Masks must be worn at all times when in the building—even when in the restrooms, with the exception of brief removal for communion, as described in "Communion Consumption."
- Masks will be available at all entrances for individuals who do not have one.
- Individuals who sneeze will be expected to step outside if they need to remove their mask.

Hand Hygiene

- Hand sanitizers will be available in the nave and in other prominent locations throughout the building for hand hygiene when soap and water are not readily available.
- Individuals will be encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (or more) to help keep their hands clean, especially after coughing sneezing, blowing their nose, or touching frequently used objects or surfaces, including prayer books.
- All individuals will be expected to dispose of used tissue in provided waste bins and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterwards.
- All individuals will be instructed to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds (or longer) before exiting the bathroom.

Communion

Communion Distribution

- Individual wafers will be placed in compostable paper cups and wrapped with plastic wrap on a tray. Vergers will prepare these trays before the service with gloves, sanitized hands, and in masks. The plastic wrap will remain on the tray throughout the Eucharistic prayer (while the priest speaks over the bread and wine).
- Individual and sealed containers of grape juice will be distributed as wine.
- Each participant will take the individual items and only touch what he or she will consume.
- The priest will never touch the items that participants consume. The priest will use hand sanitizer before distribution begins.
- Those who distribute communion will wear masks and not speak during the distribution.

Communion Consumption

- Each person will be instructed to remove their mask to consume the bread and the wine only when six feet away from all others, and only for that brief moment.

Offerings

- An offering plate will not be circulated during the service.
- A locked box/basket/plate will be placed in the nave for individuals to deposit their offerings as they enter or leave the worship space.
- Congregants who wish to make an offering will also be encouraged to do so online via the “Giving” tab on Church Community Builder (CCB).

Other Worship Details (continues on next page)

- Windows in the nave will be open prior to, during, and after the service to provide ventilation.
- The clergy will vest in the sacristy.
- At no time will more than TWO people be in the sacristy together.
- If two clergy are present they will sit on opposite sides of the chancel.
- The preacher will preach from the top of the chancel steps.
- There will be no touching or physical contact when sharing the peace or entering and exiting the building.
- For the midweek service, each worshipper will be provided a separate prayer book. Prayer books will be used only once per week, and only by one individual.
- All worship leaders and faith community members will leave the building promptly after the liturgy's conclusion.
- The nave and sacristy will be in use on a regular basis for this weekday service with the basement and kitchen used infrequently.
- In the lower level, there is a bathroom for men and women, as well as a unisex bathroom for handicapped men and women. Only one person at a time is allowed in each bathroom unless someone using the bathroom requires assistance.

Communication

Signage

- Free and readily available signs from MDH and CDC will be posted in prominent locations throughout the building— including the entrances, exits, and restrooms— to promote public health mitigation strategies, and to remind individuals to adhere to these practices at all times when they are in the building.
- Markings and/or decals will be placed on the floors to facilitate social distancing by indicating where individuals can sit or stand.

Congregation Communication

- Phase II of St Matthew's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan will be communicated to the vestry, congregants, visitors, and guests via emails and announcements.
- Congregants will be encouraged to be vaccinated as soon as possible after they become eligible.
- The plan will be posted on the church's website for viewing and downloading.
- A printed copy of the plan will also be available upon request.

Communication of a Positive Case (continues on next page)

- If clergy/staff and/or a faith community member receives a positive COVID-19 test, those who were in contact with that person at worship will be informed that they were exposed to a person with a positive COVID-19 test result.
- Clergy or staff will notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility.
- Clergy or staff will communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Individuals who participated in a church service where they were exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 will be advised to stay home away from others, get tested, monitor their symptoms, and follow CDC and MDH's guidelines if symptoms develop.

Communication of a Positive Case (continued from previous page)

- Congregants or staff with symptoms of COVID-19, or who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, will be advised to not return to the building for any reason until they have met CDC and MDH's criteria to end home quarantine.

Return Following COVID-19

NOTE: In all cases, individuals should follow the guidance of their doctors and local health department. The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with your healthcare provider and state and local health departments. Some people, for example those with conditions that weaken their immune system, might continue to shed virus even after they recover.

Return Following Confirmed or Suspected Case of COVID-19

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who suspect that they have had COVID-19 can return to St. Matthews only after all of these conditions are met:

- Their cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms are better.
- Ten days have passed since they first felt sick.
- They have not had a fever for at least 24 hours, without using any medication to lower their fever. (Minnesota Department of Health).
- No exceptions.

Return Following Unvaccinated Exposure to COVID-19

Individuals who are not yet fully vaccinated and have been exposed to COVID-19 can return to St. Matthews only after all of these conditions are met:

- They have had no symptoms of COVID-19.
- Fourteen days have passed since their exposure.

Cleaning

Routine Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

- Regular practices of cleaning and disinfecting will be implemented, including a schedule for routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces and areas, including door knobs, light fixtures, tables, railings, and restrooms.
- Appropriate and effective cleaning and disinfecting supplies have been purchased and are available for use in accordance with product labels, safety data sheets and manufacturer specifications, and are being used with required personal protective equipment for the product.

Ventilation

- The parish hall and church offices use an HVAC system. This system will have filter changes semi-annually as a part of HVAC maintenance.
- The sanctuary space uses radiator, steam-boiler heat but does not have a central air return. Ceiling fans are present. On days above 55 degrees, prior to an indoor service, all windows in the sanctuary will be opened and the ceiling fans turned on to increase air flow.

Cleaning After the Confirmation of a COVID-19 Case

Staff and designated contractors will follow cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting recommendations outlined in the CDC guidelines established for cleaning and disinfecting buildings or facilities when someone is sick or has a COVID-19 diagnosis. These guidelines include:

- Closing off areas used by the person who was sick.
- Opening doors and windows to increase air circulation.
- Waiting for up to 24 hours (as long as possible) to allow respiratory droplets to settle before disinfecting and cleaning.
- Cleaning and disinfecting all areas used by the individual who was sick, including the bathrooms and common areas.

Staff Work Arrangements

- Staff will wear masks at all times and keep a six feet distance from each other.
- No more than two staff members will work in the main office at the same time.
- Staff are not to come to church or to visit church members when they are experiencing any of the Covid-related symptoms listed in the “Staying Home While Sick” section.
- Staff will be expected to fully comply with the actions outlined in “Staying Home While Sick.”

Plan Monitoring

- The vestry, clergy, and staff are expected to monitor how effectively the program has been implemented. All vestry members, clergy, and staff will take an active role and collaborate in carrying out the various aspects of this plan, and update the protections, protocols, work-practices and training as necessary.
- The plan will be updated as necessary by the vestry.