



CHAPEL of the CROSS

an historic Episcopal Church

Reopening Policies

After considering guidance from the Bishop, Governor both – 24 April’s “Safer at Home” (Executive Order 1477) and 27 May’s “Safe Return” (Executive Order 1492), CDC, MSDH, and Church Mutual, as well as consulting the Wardens, LouAnn Woodward, MD (member, Vice Chancellor & Dean of the University of Mississippi Medical Center), Stephen Stray, PhD (Assistant Professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Virologist), and Stephania Jackson, RN (member, Director of Children’s Ministries), the Vestry has adopted the following Reopening Policy.

- As part of this reopening policy, we first acknowledge the grace of God, and we pray for God’s guidance for our physical, mental, and spiritual health. In that regard, we consider an essay written by the Rt. Rev. N. T. Wright, “Should Churches Reopen? The Answer Lies in Thinking of This as a Time of Exile.” Bishop Wright is the Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews, a Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, the former bishop of Durham, and a favorite author of our Wednesday Morning Bible Study.
 - time.com/5837693/should-churches-reopen-thinking-about-exile
- We also acknowledge that good and faithful folks disagree on these issues. Here is a good article reminding us how we can healthily and positively interact in these awkward times:
 - www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/family-friends-disagree-social-distancing-coronavirus/2020/06/06/ec4b034a-a769-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b_story.html
- Bishop Brian Seage has provided us with specific reopening guidelines which are incorporated into this policy. As of this time, no plan or protocol has been developed to determine when these guidelines will lessen. Moreover, the guidelines issued by Bishop Seage apply to both indoor and outdoor services.
- Governor Reeves’ “Safe Worship” guidance, published 19 May, states, “with the strategic, measured reopening of businesses and communities across the state, it’s time to evaluate in-person worship services. That decision is serious and should be made by each house of worship and its leadership based on the unique needs of it’s faith community.”
- Individuals may be at high risk for complications related to the Coronavirus. For more information visit this webpage:
 - governorreeves.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/Executive-Order-1492-Safer-Return.pdf
- Individuals who have traveled in the past 14 days by commercial transportation (i.e. air, train, cruise ship, etc.) are encouraged to participate in online worship offerings for the safety and well-being of fellow parishioners.
- Individuals who feel ill or live in a household where someone feels ill are specifically asked not to attend in-person worship.
- Individuals who have tested positive for the virus within the last 10 days or have had an unprotected exposure to COVID-19 within the last 14 days are specifically asked not to attend in-person worship.

If one has tested positive for the virus, one can attend in-person worship if 10 days have passed since their positive test, s/he has been fever free for at least 3 days, and is experiencing improved respiratory symptoms.

- All persons who plan to attend an in-person worship service should check their temperature at home prior to arriving on campus and are specifically asked not to attend if they have a fever.
- Because the Bishop's guidance only allows for Sunday worship gatherings at this time, until further notice, the office will remain closed, and all meetings, classes, and other gatherings (besides AA) will continue to be offered online. In case of pastoral need or emergency, at the clergy's discretion, certain sacramental rites (burial, matrimony, baptism, etc.) are permitted so long as they follow the same guidelines as Sunday worship set forth herein.
- Sanitizing protocols will be developed with the sexton and cleaning crew.
- Improved air filters are being secured for high-traffic indoor facilities at the Chapel.
- During the first phases of reopening, as appropriate for the specific service, there will be limited access to indoor facilities, including the Chapel, the hallway in the Parish Hall building, the restrooms in the Parish Hall building. Other buildings/rooms, including the Education Building and playground, will remain closed at this time.
- In order to try to assess risk, all individuals who attend a worship service are asked to inform the parish office as soon as possible if s/he, tests positive for the virus, or if s/he becomes ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection within 14 days of attending a worship service. Because an asymptomatic attendee can transfer the virus, attendees are also asked to report if a non-attendee in close personal contact with attendee tests positive or develops COVID-19 symptoms within this 14 day period.
- An online or telephone reservation system will be established for in-person worship services. This system will enable the Chapel to maintain required attendance thresholds as well as enable contact tracing in the event an attendee tests positive for the virus or exhibits symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Accommodations will be made for those who cannot access an online reservation system, and preferences will be made in a rotating fashion, so that as many members as possible may attend in-person worship services.
- During any gathering, all participants over two years of age are required to wear a mask or cloth face covering at all times. Ushers will provide disposable masks for any congregant who does not have a mask. Those who receive a face covering are responsible for disposing of it or (preferably) taking it with them.
- At in-person worship services, a no-touch thermometer will be available for any parishioner who would like to confirm that they do not have a fever.
- Hand sanitizer will be readily available at all services, including in the pews. The restrooms will be stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Social distancing will be observed at all times, meaning all individuals, unless they live in the same household or are a part of the same extended family, should remain six feet away from one another.
- Childcare cannot be offered at this time.
- At this time, because of the current guidance from the Bishop, seating at in-person worship services in the Chapel will be limited to 45 individuals, and parishioners should maintain a safe, social distance from individuals outside of their household.

- Clergy, ushers, altar guild members, and anyone who may touch items of worship should wash or sanitize their hands before, during, and after serving.
- All Books of Common Prayer, Hymnals, and other printed materials will be removed from the worship services. A bulletin will be produced for each service containing all worship materials. A digital version of this bulletin will be posted and distributed, so congregants may participate in the service via a personal electronic device. Bringing personal Books of Common Prayer are also welcome.
- Alms Basins will not be circulated during in-person worship service. However, one or more stationary receptacles will be available for an offering.
- Each service will include one officiant or priest, one usher, one Vestry member, and (if available) one organist and/or one instrumentalist. No vergers or acolytes will be used.
- Traffic areas in and out of the Chapel, to and from the altar, and to and from the restrooms will be guided as one way. Ushers, clergy, and other participants will direct traffic in a manner to promote social distancing.
- While instrumental music may be offered during a service, congregational singing may not occur at this time.
- Outdoor services, such as worship services on the lawn in front of the Chapel or in the Music Tent area across the parking lot from the Chapel, may be offered. While an outdoor service may accommodate more participants (i.e. a maximum of 100 at this time), all of the guidelines set forth in this policy will be followed.
- Eucharist, if celebrated, will be offered in “one kind,” i.e. bread only. Communion will be distributed at a standing station rather than at the altar rail. The priest will sanitize their hands before the Eucharistic prayer and before the distribution of communion. The wafers will be covered during the offering of the Eucharistic prayer.
- Bulletins, disposable masks, and any other single use items will not be re-used.
- Congregants are encouraged to maintain social distance after the conclusion of an in-person worship service. A social hour, coffee, water, and other hospitality cannot be offered at this time.
- When an in-person service is offered, it will be broadcast via Facebook Live and/or another platform to permit virtual participation for those who cannot attend.
- During any in-person worship service, a Vestry member will be available to discuss these guidelines with anyone who might have questions.
- An invitation-only “test service” may be organized before in-person worship officially resumes, to walk through these protocols, discover any unforeseen issues, etc.