

Saint Mark's Phased Approach for Increasing In-Person Parish Life
September 1, 2020

We are pleased to announce that Saint Mark's will return to in-person worship beginning with outdoor worship at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 6.

Outdoor in-person worship at 8:00 a.m.

For the next two Sundays, September 6 and September 13, the 10:30 a.m. service will continue online only and Father Chris will officiate an outdoor service at 8 a.m. Safety measures include:

- Clergy and lay reader must be at least 20 feet from the worshippers
- Face coverings are required
- Strict observance of social distancing, including when arriving and exiting
- Hard copy bulletins will be provided, with minimal handling; downloading is encouraged
- "No contact" offering of greetings and peace instead of shaking hands or hugging
- Instead of passing offering plates, a basket will be available and online giving is encouraged
- All are reminded to stay home if not feeling well

Return to indoor, in-person worship (Phase Two) at both 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., beginning September 20:

This step is subject to change with little notice, as the public health advisory status or other guidance changes. Indoor worship is possible when public health indicators are favorable: for example, rates of cases, hospitalizations and death are declining and Franklin County is assessed at Level 2 (Orange).

- We will continue to refrain from singing and from sharing bread and wine
- Face masks will be required
- Social distancing will be achieved by marking off the available seats
- Efforts will be made for as much as "touchless" experience as possible, by propping open entry doors, limited handling of bulletins, removal of prayer books and hymnals from pews
- High contact surfaces, such as pews, will be cleaned and disinfected before and after each service
- A log of all visitors will be needed
- Worship assistants will guide attendees as they enter and exit to ensure social distance: the verger, acolyte and usher roles could be "re-imagined" to support this new role
- Virtual coffee hour will be offered

Saint Mark's parish includes active ministries, such as Outreach, Mark's Men, etc., which are meeting online at present. While no change in this online format is expected in Phase Two,

summer and fall are ideal times for people to meet outdoors in groups of two or more, but less than ten.

Also at this time, groups, primarily support groups such as AA, who have agreed to follow our safety guidelines, are being allowed to use our parish hall for meetings of 10 or fewer.

Future of online worship:

Because many in our church family may fall into a risk group and are expected to continue to choose to worship online in Phase Two, Saint Mark's intends to provide an online means for worship for the foreseeable future. The latest instructions for online worship access can be found on the Saint Mark's website home page. At present, there is a Facebook livestream of the 10:30 a.m. service, also broadcast via Zoom. This allows for maximum participation, including by telephone. The videos for all services are also available on-demand, immediately following each live broadcast on Saint Mark's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/saintmarkscolumbus/videos>

During this time of world health crisis, Saint Mark's has kept the safety of our community in mind when our church was closed to in-person worship. This has represented an additional sacrifice during this extraordinarily difficult time. As we plan to increase our in-person parish life, Saint Mark's is guided by direction from our diocesan bishop, the Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal. Bishop Breidenthal has provided a phased plan, which is designed to protect the spiritual health and physical safety of our church. The movement between phases is driven by the direction from public health officials, good science and pastoral care in our community and is subject to change, either backwards or forwards. In early July, the State of Ohio published a public health advisory system which assigns a status to each county in the state and is updated weekly, each Thursday afternoon.

Bishop Breidenthal has asked the clergy and lay leadership in each church to determine how best to apply these guidelines. Accordingly, Saint Mark's formed the "Open Hearts, Open Doors" Task Force in May. See the link on Saint Mark's website for a list of task force members and other materials.

We are blessed that our Diocese is vigilant about rapidly responding to the changing direction from the State of Ohio public health and other officials and ask for patience as guidelines are subject to change with very little notice.