

Frequently Asked Questions - Regathering for Worship

St. James' Episcopal Church, Fremont

Updated: June 20, 2020

The Diocese of California and the County of Alameda have issued guidelines for regathering for worship. The answers to most of these questions are based on those guidelines.

When will we be gathering in person for worship?

Because the infection rate in Alameda County is increasing rather than flattening or declining, we are being very cautious. We understand the need to provide meaningful worship and opportunities for community, but paramount to that is the safety of our parishioners. We will continue offering virtual worship as our primary service and are exploring limited in-person gatherings. These gatherings will be in the form of small groups gathered for prayer. We hope to roll out these gatherings in the near future. More information will be forthcoming.

When we are able to return, how many people can worship at once?

Gatherings of 25% of facility capacity or a maximum of 100 people are allowed if the venue is indoors and provided the 6'+ social distancing mandate is followed. Outdoors, the suggested maximum is 25 people. However, the County of Alameda strongly suggests that no gathering, indoor or outdoor, exceed 25 people. Up Children will stay with their families.

Will there be regular programs for the children and youth?

Due to the direction that children and youth remain with their families, Sunday School and youth gatherings will not be available at this time. Our nursery space and playground will not be open for play. Recorded Sunday school lessons will continue being available to watch at home online.

Will we have both the 8:00 and 10:30 services?

We will continue with online virtual worship which can be viewed from your home at a time convenient for you. The number of in-person gatherings and meeting times are still being discussed. One variable will be the number of people interested in coming to church for in-person gatherings.

Will we be able to worship in the Little Church?

Due to the smallness of the Little Church, physical distancing is not possible. Therefore, we will not be using the Little Church for the foreseeable future.

Will we be gathering outside or inside?

Because studies show that the safest spaces are outdoor spaces, any in-person gatherings will likely take place on the front lawn. In order to also allow people to worship from home, we will continue offering our primary virtual service that will be recorded in the Big Church with a small worship team.

If the attendance number is capped, how will it be determined who can attend the prayer groups?

We are still considering the best method. It may be a reservation system or some other selection based on last name or random lottery. Depending on interest, we may ask people to gather in-person every other week instead of weekly.

I am over 65 and/or have at-risk health conditions. Can I still attend?

The bishop is encouraging anyone over 65 and those with high-risk medical conditions to consider their health and not participate in in-person gatherings at this time.

What will be the individual requirements for gathering at church?

All participants will be required to wear a mask (over the age of 2), maintain a 6' + distance from others not in their household, have their temperature checked and use hand sanitizer before entering the worship space.

Will we be able to celebrate Holy Communion?

There will be no distribution of consecrated bread and wine.

What else will be temporarily prohibited?

Any physical items such as collection plates, prayer books, hymnals, other worship materials will not be used. Congregational hymns singing, humming, praying in unison, and passing the peace will not be allowed.

Coffee hours and post-service gatherings will be suspended for now.

Will we still have Ushers, Greeters, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Acolytes?

We will be using as few people as possible for the worship team. This will likely include lectors and ushers only for our in-person prayer groups. The online, virtual worship will have a slightly different composition of servers but will still be minimal.

With everything we cannot have, what can we expect?

Any in-person gathering will be spirit-filled and for the purpose of community and prayer. It will contain lessons, homily and discussion, prayers. Our virtual service that you can enjoy from your home will continue to be our primary service and will contain lessons, sermon, solo singing and instrumental music, recorded music, and prayer.

What if I choose to not physically go to church? Will services still be offered online?

We will offer a weekly service so that you can still enjoy worship from home.

Will I be able to watch the service online at any time?

The service will be available for you to watch at your convenience. However, we encourage you to watch during your normal church times (8:00 or 10:30) so that we continue to worship as a community.

What about other gatherings such as bible study and the Wednesday service?

For now, those gatherings will remain virtual.

Will the front office be open anytime soon?

Because it is impossible to maintain social distancing in the office, we will continue our practice of limited office hours by appointment only on Wednesdays from 10-1. We ask that in person visits be limited to urgent matters only and that our parish administrator be contacted in advance of any potential visit.