



Congregational Regathering Plan

Revised December 31, 2020

Congregational Regathering Committee

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Charge

Per the guidance from Bishop Deon Johnson via the *Updated Guidance for Gatherings in the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri*, effective September 1, 2020, and at the direction of Priest-in-charge, Rev. Annette Joseph, and Co-Senior Warden, Kevin Hampton, Christ Episcopal Church's (CEC) Congregational Regathering Committee (CRC) met for the first time on Tuesday, September 29, 2020.

This committee will meet on a monthly basis to monitor COVID-19 statistics within the city and county of Cape Girardeau, revise the existing re-opening plan created in June 2020, work with the Bishop's Office on submission and approval of a re-opening plan, and make recommendations to the Vestry as needed.

The Congregational Regather Committee tasks are the following:

- Develop, refine, or update a regathering plan for submission to the Bishop's office.
- Monitor local public health conditions.
- Remain in contact with bishop's staff as we monitor local outbreak conditions.

The CRC will review the following plan as needed and notify The Vestry of any recommended changes.

Recommendations

10/2/2020 The committee would like to recommend to the Vestry that the re-opening of worship at Christ Episcopal Church be delayed until at least December 31, 2020. Given the current rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in the region and the need to provide appropriate time for planning for a re-opening, the committee feels this is necessary and prudent. The committee plans to make another recommendation on re-opening on or before December 31.

12/30/2020 Though the infectious rate of Cape Girardeau County has been declining for several days and the COVID-19 infectious rate is currently at .86%, the Holiday Season and slow roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine, poses a continued need for caution. The committee recommends that Christ Episcopal Church stay closed to congregational regathering and keep services completely virtual until at least February 7, 2021. The committee will re-evaluate the infectious rates the first week of February 2021 and make a recommendation to the Vestry at that time.

Virtual Worship Service and Closing of Church Buildings Guidelines

Due to the rise in COVID-19 cases within Cape Girardeau County, Rev. Annette Joseph, moved all worship at CEC to fully virtual and closed the Church Building and Parish Hall as of Sunday, November 22, 2020. New health standards were established by the Bishop's Office to define as to when a return to live-streaming worship and opening of the church buildings can occur.

Public Health Standards

Virtual worship should be established, and church buildings closed whenever there is:

- a dramatic increase in cases. (Ex. 1.40 to 1.46 within a day).

- the infectious rate is 1.2 or higher.

When these criteria are met a decision to move to virtual worship and closing of church buildings will be made by the Priest-in-Charge in coordination with the Vestry. The committee will recommend to the Vestry when a return to live-stream service is possible and church buildings can be re-opened.

Congregational Regathering Plan

It is the intent of Christ Episcopal Church, situated in the City of Cape Girardeau in the County of Cape Girardeau in the state of Missouri, to begin in-person worship and open parish buildings for the use of internal and external groups on **February 7, 2021**, provided that COVID-19 cases within the county have met the criteria set by the Bishop's Office.

Public Health Standards

Public health standards for re-opening as set forth in the *Updated Guidance for Gatherings in the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri* (updated September 1, 2020) are as follows:

- The number of COVID-19 cases in Cape Girardeau county has decreased for 14 days or has held steady with a mere handful of cases (five or fewer).
Website: <https://showmestrong.mo.gov/data/public-health>
- The infection rate (R-naught) is less than 1.0, which means that on average in the community, each infected person is infecting less than one other person and the total number of current cases is shrinking.
Website: <https://covidactnow.org/us/mo/?s=1368354>
- The positive test rate is less than 10%, preferably closer to 3% or less. The positive test rate measures how many people test positive compared to all who were tested in a given period of time and indicates whether

testing is widespread enough to detect most new cases. The ability to identify and isolate cases is key to controlling the infection.

Website: <https://covidactnow.org/us/mo/?s=1368354>

The data will be verified weekly by visiting the designated websites. A CRC member will call the Cape Girardeau Health Department each month to verify that COVID19 is contained, testing is readily available, and contact tracing measures are in place.

If someone in our congregation is diagnosed with COVID19, CEC will cooperate with the Cape Girardeau Health Department in contact tracing.

Sanitization and Cleaning

The church building will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized prior to reopening and prior to each Sunday worship service by contracted cleaners.

Internal and external groups using the building will be required to clean and sanitize areas they use immediately following their meetings. Guidelines for sanitizing/cleaning will be put into the *Building Use Agreement* for informational and legal purposes.

Sanctuary Services

CEC's sanctuary is home to five (5) gatherings per week:

- Sunday 8 am worship service (without music)
- Sunday 10:15 am worship service
- Monday Contemplative Prayer
- Wednesday Evening Prayer
- Thursday Contemplative Prayer

The maximum capacity of the sanctuary for safe distancing is fifteen (15) people including those participating in the service. The Parish Hall will be used, as

needed, to ensure safe distancing. Those in the Parish Hall will view the service through via a streaming platform.

The 10:15 am Sunday worship service and Evening Prayer on Wednesday will be live-streamed for parishioners to attend virtually even after regathering is approved. This will help keep the number of in-person attendees within safety guidelines.

Guidelines for In-Person Worship

Announcements will be made, and signs will be posted establishing the expectations of social distancing and the wearing of facial coverings throughout the service. Both safety measures will be expected before, during, and after the service. Expectations will be as follows:

- Wear face masks at all times.
- Maintain at least six (6) feet of distance between those outside your household.
- You may sit in pods (closer than 6 feet) to members of your household.
- Do not sit in roped off pews or seating marked as unavailable.
- Weather permitting, the doors will be left open to allow the flow of fresh air into the building during service.

Bulletins will be made available online through CEC's website (<https://www.christchurchcape.org/bulletins.html>) to minimize the need for physical copies. Limited amounts of printed copies will be made available.

The offering plate will not be passed around but left in a fixed location. Opportunities will be made available through CEC's website (<https://www.christchurchcape.org>) for people to donate virtually. Parishioners can also mail in their donations to the CEC office.

In lieu of handshakes and hugs during the Passing of the Peace, congregants will be asked to use alternative forms of acknowledgement.

The Holy Eucharist will not occur, but alternative forms of communion will be offered.

Congregational and choir singing will not be permitted. Music for services will be provided by one singer and instrumentalist, total, practicing safe distancing for that form of activity.

The priest will greet congregants outside the building (weather permitting) to discourage the formation of a receiving line after worship.

Coffee hour, following the service, will be cancelled or held virtually.

A designated member of the Vestry will complete and document the *Checklist for In-Person Worship* prescribed by the Diocese of Missouri on a weekly basis.

Supplies

CEC will provide the following:

- Face masks for those who do not otherwise have access.
- Soap and paper towels and hand sanitizer for hand washing.

Nursery Services

Due to the inability to practice safe social distancing, nursery services will be closed until it is deemed safe to reopen.

Ministries

CEC has put new locks on all doors to church buildings since the onset of COVID19 and distributed keys to group leaders only to ensure compliance with safety and cleaning measures. The Parish Hall, where most non-worship events are held, has a maximum capacity of thirty (30) to ensure safe social distancing.

Hunger Ministries

The Food Pantry and Community Supper will continue to operate during any shutdown as to continue to provide vital services to those in need. Safe social distancing and food handling guidelines will be followed as prescribed by the Cape Girardeau County Health Department.

Recovery and LGBTQ+ Group Ministries

Groups using the building will be asked to sanitize and clean all surfaces and areas used during their meetings. Guidelines for sanitizing/cleaning will be put into the *Building Use Agreement* for informational and legal purposes.

Groups will be required to alert the CEC office should anyone within their group be diagnosed with COVID-19. Larger gathers of recover groups will not be allowed at this time.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals, etc.

Services such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals will be handled according to the guidelines stated above, those described by the Diocese of Missouri, and in accordance with local health department best practices.