

March 1, 2021  
St. David's Day

Dear People of S. Stephen's:

Effective today, S. Stephen's is open again for in-person worship. After preparing for this moment and monitoring state and local statistics, your Wardens and I felt that it was acceptable to resume in-person worship with the kind of protocols and precautions that were in place when we resumed in-person worship back in July. On Friday, February 26, Bishop Knisely wrote to the clergy of the Diocese and said that given the current trends and statistics, it was reasonable for parishes to resume the kind of worship they had practiced in the fall. I informed him of our intent to re-open to in-person worship, and he gave us his approval and blessing.

What follows is not new, and the stated precautions are essentially the same as before. The one thing that is new or different is that there is now a vaccine, and some of you have already had your first and second vaccination or have them scheduled. This has also factored into our decision to re-open: **however, if you are vaccinated, you are not exempt from following the protocols set in place**, as we must keep safe those who are not yet vaccinated.

Our regathering comes with clear and necessary precautions:

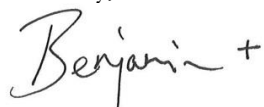
- Do not attend church in person if you are feeling sick
- Face coverings must be worn (we will have masks available if you need one)
- Hands will be sanitized upon entering the building
- Attendees are asked to take an "I sat here" flyer and leave it at your seat for later cleaning
- Name and contact information will be collected for potential contact tracing
- Seating will be at least six feet apart from unrelated individuals (households may sit together)
- There will be no physical exchange of the Peace and no passing of the offering plate. (There will be one receptacle for leaving your offering, or you may donate electronically)
- Communion will be by bread only, received in the hand. The priest will come to the entrance to the chancel, wearing a mask and having sanitized his hands. Communicants will come up the center aisle still wearing masks, observing the markers to stay six feet apart. Upon receiving communion, move at least six feet to the side (also marked) before removing your mask and consuming the host. Hand sanitizer will be available for cleaning your hands after receiving communion. Return to your pew by the side aisles.

Equivalent procedures will apply to the daily masses in the Lady Chapel. We will continue to broadcast the daily and Sunday masses on our Facebook page for those who cannot or choose not to attend in person.

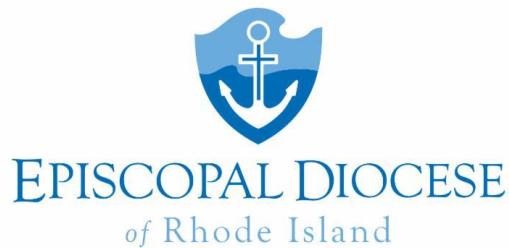
Below, you will find the Diocesan Covenant for Regathering that went out in June 2020, which reminds us that our decisions and actions are placed in the context of caring for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, joined to one another by having been baptized into the same Christ.

Please feel free to be in touch with me with questions or concerns by emailing me at [rector@sstephens.necoxmail.com](mailto:rector@sstephens.necoxmail.com), or by calling the office at (401)421-6702.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin +".

The Rev'd Benjamin Pearce Straley  
Rector



I promise, to the best of my ability with God's help, to abide by the guidelines of the Diocese of Rhode Island for participation in church as we regather during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In faithfulness to the Baptismal Covenant (BCP p. 304-305), I will strive to:

*Love my neighbor as myself, I will...*

- Wear a mask or scarf over my nose and mouth at all times in church buildings, except momentarily to receive the sacrament or lead worship by an assigned speaking part, and follow public health guidelines for hand sanitizing and disinfecting.
- Only attend worship if I am non-symptomatic for the COVID-19 virus or any other transmittable disease that could compromise the health of another person also attending.
- Abstain from attending if doing so would put me at greater risk due to my own health status.

*Respect the dignity of every human being, I will...*

- Make no physical contact with people beyond the members of my own household.
- Maintain a six foot or more distance from other members of the congregation.
- Respect any requests for distance, masking, cleaning, and disinfecting to ensure the safety and comfort level of others.

*Seek and serve Christ in all people...*

- Support the decisions of my diocesan and congregational leaders.
- Stay connected with others in my community by telephone, video chat, mail, or other means.

This is our expectation for all those who wish to worship with us in person. By participating in our worship, you assume responsibility for following the above, and acknowledge the risks of participation in an in-person gathering.

June 2020