

# St Thomas's, Newark

## A guide to our return to in-person worship

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, St Thomas's will resume in-person worship on Sundays at 9:00 AM and Wednesdays at 12:00 noon. Both services will be open to the congregation and anyone else in the community who might like to attend, but with safety precautions designed to help keep everyone healthy. This guide answers some basic questions about how things will work.

### Who can come to church?

Anyone can be present for worship. We ask that those who have any of the major COVID-19 symptoms – cough, fever, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, sore throat – or who know they have been exposed to COVID-19 not attend in person until they have appropriate medical clearance. We also encourage those who are at high risk of complications of infection to consider delaying their return to the in-person services.

### Will “YouTube church” end when in-person services start again?

No! **We will continue to live-stream all of our services.** Those who can't yet return to live worship, those who may be traveling, and even those who have never been to St Thomas's can keep worshiping with us in exactly the same way they have done over the past few months.

### How can I know I'll be safe in church?

We will be taking a number of steps to keep everyone safe. All those in attendance will be required to wear masks at all times (with the exception of readers, the preacher, and other when they are “on camera”). Ample quantities of hand sanitizer will be made available at the church door, in

the narthex, near the altar, and in other key places, and reminders about using it will be given during services. Seating will be limited and configured to maintain safe distances between non-related people. A sign-in book will be in place and staffed at the church door to keep a record of all who attend each service and provide a way of following up if someone should later become sick. And all high-contact surfaces and touch points (like pew seats and door handles) will be sanitized after each service.

### Will church look different?

Some aspects of our worship will be different. Singing will be kept to a minimum. Communion will be distributed in one kind (bread) only, in small plastic cups that help minimize contact with the hosts. The Peace will be passed only with “touch-free” gestures. We will encourage those who wish to gather to visit with friends before or after church to do so outside, or at least to maintain safe distances.

### How many people can attend in person?

We estimate that 36 to 38 people can be accommodated in the nave and the balcony. At such time as more people want to attend, if the state-mandated capacity limits have not changed, we have plans for overflow seating in the parish hall. To give us an idea of how many people to expect, we will be using an **advance reservation system – Sign-Up Genius** (the same one that was used this summer for food donations) for Sunday services. The reservation “book” for each Sunday will open the prior Wednesday. You will receive an email from Cana with the link. Those without reservations will not necessarily be turned away, but we hope everyone will pitch in to help make church attendance planning as efficient as possible. For the time being, the Wednesday service will be open without the need for advance sign-up.

## Will there be coffee hour and Sunday School and other usual stuff?

For the time being, there will be no coffee hour or in-person Christian education for children. Most events in the Christian education for adults calendar will be offered in a blended in-person and virtual format. Other church meetings and classes will continue to be virtual until the Vestry decides to permit them to resume.

## How can I get other questions answered?

If you have other questions or concerns, please contact Fr Howie (302-368-4644 or [Howell.sasser.jr@gmail.com](mailto:Howell.sasser.jr@gmail.com)) or any other member of the parish's reopening task force (Deacon Cecily, Barb Eldred, Sally Price, Martha Holyoke, Ronnie Wilbur, and Brian Smith).