

**Saint Stephen and the Incarnation**

**Regathering Plan**

**Revised 12.09.20**

**Revised 2.27.21**

**Revised 3.15.21**

**Prepared by the Regathering Committee**

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**Submitted to the Vestry 10.19.20**

**Revised version submitted to the Vestry 2.22.21**

**Revised and submitted to the vestry 3.21.21**

This Regathering Plan has three Sections:

This document is presented to the SSI Vestry. It includes three sections: a proposal for a survey to return to physical worship, a proposed timeline, and a draft regathering plan. It is our expectation that the vestry will review these materials and assign a team to undertake the survey. The vestry should review the timeline and make a decision about dates, including the determination of the date and structure of the annual meeting. The final document should form the basis of their report to the Dioceses.

We are proposing a staged plan for regathering, with periodic checks to be sure that we are on target.

This regathering committee stands ready to take on the next steps as directed by the vestry.

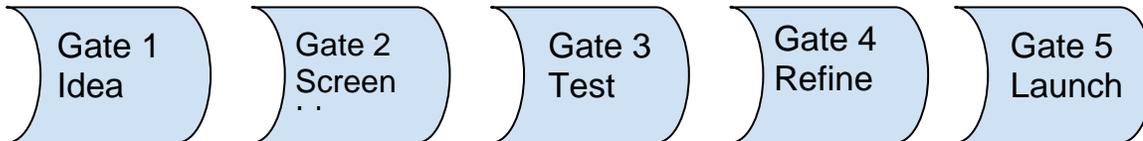
Some key planning principles:

We respectfully submit this to the Saint Stephen and the Incarnation Vestry to support the regathering of the parish for in-person worship. We are mindful of SSI Reopening timeline. The SSI Regathering timeline maintains the following positions:

1. Remember not all parishioners have access to digital tools
2. We plan to present our reopening plan in stages to both the vestry and the diocese
3. We envision a plan that includes both in-person and on-line engagement (that we refer to as "Hybrid")
4. Reopening events will occur in ways that best support the parish as a whole as well as the groups within the parish who share common languages and customs
5. Each stage and each step communicated as progress (not necessarily for discussion) to entire parish

**Timeline:**

The Regathering committee is using the mnemonic of “Gates and Stages” to guide the SSI decision making toward the future. Gates are key points that we must pass through; Stages are activities.



**Gate 1 (Idea):** Establishment of Regathering Committee - report to Vestry on Virtual efforts; Diocesan guidelines; DC guidelines; CDC/FEMA guidelines as required by current governmentally and Diocesan defined Phase 2 conditions

Stage 1 (nearly completed): March - October, ad hoc requests handled by Mike and Sam

- Survey sent and analyzed
- Planning and budgeting continues based on results and various governing bodies’ guidelines
- Survey of staff availability to provide programming both virtually and in-person
- Survey of financial resources available for further programming
- Phased report with Gates and Stages sent to Diocese

**Gate 2 (Screen idea):** Change in Diocesan recommendations (mindful of the DC status)

- Approval by Diocese of phased opening plan using hybrid model

Stage 2: September - Oct Regathering Committee poses criteria for reopening, coordinates with city and diocese guidelines (staff availability, cleaning services, training)

- Building is modified and procedures designed for access, flow, spacing, ventilation, and cleaning
- Training of all staff, clergy, congregants and volunteers in all hygiene and inter-personal procedures
- Proposed Criteria for moving between stages
  - Accordance with local regulation
  - Church is ready (capacity targets, cleaning supplies, markings, entry/exit
  - All staff, clergy and parishioners sign covenant
- Annual meeting is the first parish event (in person and on-line)
- “Hybrid” model (in person and online) : small group gatherings continue virtually and according to survey results, depending on staff, clergy and volunteer availability
- reservation system to communicate and increase as in-person small groups
- Using a 4-step process:
  - Plan – the document
  - Implement plan – gathering qualitative and quantitative data
  - Evaluate data and observations
  - Update plan

**Gate 3 (Test idea):** All kinks of Stage 2 worked out and DC moves to allow greater in-person activity (such as theaters re-opening)

Stage 3: October planning, and launch of part 1 of reopening plan

- Increasing progress toward new normal of liturgical, pastoral, and social justice awareness services
- “Hybrid” model continues with perhaps some greater weighting toward in-person

The parish successfully met Gates 1-3 for the fall including hosting an annual meeting in December. We reviewed the experience of the annual meeting in our February meeting.

It is now time to consider Part 2 of the Regathering plan

**Gate 4 (Refine):**

Stage 4: December 2020/ early 2021 and launch of Part 2 of reopening plan

Indoor Worship begins as soon as previous gate and stages have been met, including diocesan approval. Meetings will be in structures preferred by congregation(s). As of the date of revision, there are tentative plans for outdoor events around Holy Week 2021 with further in-person activities TBD.

The Liturgy committee decided NOT to hold any in-person worship (indoors or outside) for Holy Week. We recognize that the parish is still deliberating about an interim priest. The Liturgy Committee recommends that we consider starting an in-person, bilingual worship, perhaps for Pentecost.

It is the decision of the Vestry to launch the date for the in-person worship, and the Regathering committee will put in place the supports needed to make this happen.

At present we are restricted by the District to 48 attendees (25% of occupancy). We will be aligned with District guidelines, and we recognize that as soon as the District guidelines expand, the Vestry make the final call. In the event that we decide to have a gathering for worship in the parish space, the Regathering Committee will make provisions for overflow of in-excess numbers.

Proposed two gates as of 3.15.21

1. DC guidance regarding capacity in the parish buildings
2. CDC guidance regarding children gathering

**Gate 5 (Launch):**

Stage 5: SSI has moved into regular gatherings, if smaller and fewer than before. Should be a well-oiled machine at this point

## Regathering

### **Step 1: Registration for any event (annual meeting, Sunday service, etc.)**

Here are the instructions that would be sent via REALM or Eventbrite (May need to have a phone line or SMS for people who do not have technology - maybe phone or some automated option to the parish phone number for registration). We will have to have a way to confirm registrations; leaving a message will not be enough. We recommend working with Mike Ritonia to make sure that this is possible.

Please avoid attending services if you answer “yes” to any of these questions on the event registration:

- Have you been in contact with someone that is confirmed to have COVID-19?
- Have you received notification that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 in the past 14 days (such as when traveling by air or having attended a large event)?
- Have you experienced any of the following symptoms:
  - Fever within the last 48 hours?
  - Cough?
  - Sore Throat?
  - Shortness of Breath?
  - 1. Runny Nose?
  - 2. Headache?
  - 3. Muscle Aches?
  - 4. Hoarse voice?
  - 5. Shortness of Breath?
  - 6. Fatigue?
  - 7. Loss of Taste or Smell?
  - 8. Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?

Worshippers known to be infectious, actively sick, or symptomatic are not to attend or if visibly symptomatic, unwilling to cover the nose and mouth, or unwilling to follow directions of SSI staff will be asked to leave. Worshippers with underlying health risks are strongly discouraged from attending Services.

Questions? Contact the St. Stephen’s office at (202-232-0900) or by email ([mike@saintstephensdc.org](mailto:mike@saintstephensdc.org)).

### **Services**

Once we get to the stage that allows in person services, we recommend 2 services, one English service (09:30) and one Spanish service (Misa), depending on available clergy. This assumes that we will continue with on-line services.

Have both services in the nave, with the altar in its usual place up on the three steps on the platform. People will come to the altar for communion or the presiding clergy may walk through the congregation to distribute communion.

Will be in conversation to coordinate with the team that use the sanctuary for grocery organization and distribution.

### **Preparation of Our Physical Space And Pre-Celebration Considerations**

All gathering spaces will be thoroughly cleaned before and after services.

- Church staff cleaning crew will clean before and after services with appropriate sanitizing process
- Both services will use the Nave with cleaning after the morning service and on Monday morning after the evening service.

Automated hand sanitizer stations will be located at points of entry and exit, other high traffic areas of the church and in the sacristy. Other personal hygiene supplies (soap, paper towels, tissues) will also be readily available and accessible.

One set of doors will be the entrance, and one set for exit (both on Newton Street) with signage on the floor to direct the flow of foot traffic. More direction on the floor will lead people out the other set of doors.

Prayer books and Bibles have been removed from chairs and are boxed and stored.

The back tables have been cleared.

The Baptismal Font and other holy water fonts will remain empty and the main altar uncovered.

Votive candles underneath the icons, nicho and icon with prie dieu will be removed.

The Diocese has asked parishes to collect from their members a signed "Covenant for Re-Gathering" in advance of resuming in-person gatherings.

- We will begin to have our parishioners sign these on-line
- WE will use other means to reach people who do not have internet access
- We will link these to their REALM accounts
- We will make a list available to the greeters to confirm as each party enters the church has signed the Covenant
  - In the event that they have not
  - We will ask the greeters to use a tablet to present guest and people who have not signed the Covenant to sign at the door
- We will have a small number of paper copies available at the church to be signed at the time of arrival or to take home -
- In any event, people will have to sign the document before entering the church - greeters will take a photo of the document and send it to mike at the church (we anticipate needing to keep track of about 150 people who are known to SSI)
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Use of the restroom at home and prior to arrival for services is encouraged. Only one person will be allowed in the church bathroom at a time. If someone needs to use the restroom during services, need to ensure they are

the only person in the restroom. Restroom doors will be propped open, and disinfectant/cleaning supplies will be provided. Signs will ask each restroom user to wipe down any surfaces touched while they were inside the restroom.

To facilitate thoughtful social distance, floor and seating decals as well as directional signage and tape will be used.

Based on current chair configuration in the nave and fire marshal standards, the allowable capacity of the church will not exceed DC regulation active at time.

The Parish will offer a reservation system to allow those attending services to select a seating preference in advance. Households can sit together; otherwise at least 6 feet APART from each other.

Prior to re-opening, liturgical ministers and Greeters will receive training to assist in the implementation of the protocols and procedures of this plan. Prior to the first service, a dry run with altar party, greeters, and “attendees” will be performed.

When possible, worship bulletins will also be sent electronically in advance of Sunday, so that parishioners may use an electronic version on a tablet or smartphone.

We will encourage the use of electronic versions of bulletins and worship documents, and will maintain only a few paper recyclable, single use brief worship bulletins that will be taken home with participants.

Online giving will continue to be strongly encouraged. Collection plates will be available, but not passed during the service.

Checks and cash will be stored for a few days prior to counting. Contributions will be held for one week, and we will count one week in arrears (just as Misa currently does) Counters, when handling currency or checks, will wear personal protective gear (mask and disposable non-latex gloves) & wash hands thoroughly after completion.

We will provide the Greeters with an electronic list of everyone who has registered for a service. They will check off who has arrived and add to the electronic file the name and phone number of any additional individuals who arrived and signed the covenant. A 30-day log of all services and of those in attendance and their contact phone number will be maintained (for purposes of contact tracing, should someone become ill).

### **Worship Attendance**

Suggestion: We are using Realm or Eventbrite to reserve seating prior to any services or event. To keep everyone as safe as possible, we will be using reserved or assigned seating by household. When you arrive, please tell the greeter your name, and you will be directed to your seat. If you have not registered, the greeters will take your name and contact number and will try to assist you as quickly as possible while allowing the most efficient seating of people who have registered. Drop-ins will only be allowed up to the available open spaces.

Those attending any event MUST wear a mask or protective covering of the mouth and nose for the entirety of the service. Scarves, bandanas, or handkerchiefs are not acceptable forms of protection. We encourage everyone to bring their own, but those without an appropriate face covering will be provided a disposable mask by a greeter.

All returning members and new visitors will be required to have a signed consent or sign a new consent to the “Covenant for Re-Gathering.” The covenant will be available in English and Spanish. We will encourage on-line submission of the Covenant but will have blank copies in English and Spanish at the church.

All parish members and visitors will be asked to check in with a greeter. People who have not provided contact information in the reservation system must provide it prior to being seated to allow the church office to maintain accurate records in the event that contact tracing is required.

Social distancing guidelines apply to those not living in the same household. Persons who are related, but do not live in the same household, are required to follow social distancing guidelines.

### **Gathering & Welcome**

The Manager of Ceremonies will assist as needed in the setup of the celebration along with the Deacon and Worship Leader.

All liturgical ministers speaking roles will be assigned before the beginning of the service.

Liturgical ministers and those with speaking roles will not remove masks.

Members and visitors are encouraged to make donations online or via mail. An offering plate will be placed on a table so that any additional offerings can be collected on the way out of the sanctuary.

The Peace will not be physically exchanged.

### **Preparing the Table (once we start celebrating Eucharist)**

The Deacon/Worship Leader will prepare the altar, using a normal chalice and paten.

The Eucharistic elements will be placed on a freshly laundered corporal.

Hands will be visibly sanitized before and after the altar is set.

### **Holy Eucharist**

Liturgical Protocols for the Celebration of Holy Eucharist

The Celebrant will consecrate hosts and the wine during the service, but there will be no distribution of wine (via common cup or by intinction). Only the Celebrant will consume the consecrated wine. Only a small amount of wine is needed in the cup.

Only the Deacon/Worship leader and Celebrant will be at the altar. The Deacon/Worship Leader will stand at a distance of at least 6 feet from the Celebrant and each other. Only the Celebrant will distribute communion.

The Celebrant will visibly disinfect his/her hands at the altar or credence table.

The Celebrant, during the Eucharistic Prayer, may touch the vessels, as the rubrics specify.

The Celebrant will refrain from bowing the head over the elements to avoid bringing his/her mouth close to the elements, maintaining the recommended distance of an arm's length. The Celebrant will wear a mask and disposable non-latex gloves during the consecration.

The presiding clergy may bring communion directly to each person sitting in the Nave; this will minimize movement of participants around the church. Alternatively, the greeter will direct communicants chair by chair. Communicants will come forward in a single line to receive the Eucharist in a standing posture staying at least 6 feet apart from each other. Communicants may consume the bread after returning to their seats if they go to the celebrant to receive.

The hosts will be distributed by the Celebrant wearing a mask and disposable non-latex gloves and will be placed in the open hand.

Floor signs will mark the appropriate distance to be kept between people.

It will be communicated clearly to all present that Communion in one kind is a full expression of the Sacrament, i.e., that the whole Christ is received.

After all have received Communion, the ministers will remove their gloves and will visibly disinfect their own hands.

Communion vessels will be purified by the Manager of Ceremonies immediately after service, as is our custom.

All consecrated elements will be consumed.

#### Music

There will be no congregational singing during the liturgy.

The organist may also serve as cantor or may be assisted by a single cantor standing a minimum of 12-15 ft away from any other person.

#### Dismissal & Sending

Greeters will release sections of chairs one-at-a-time, so that exits do not become crowded as congregants depart the church.

Worship bulletins will include only essential information and will either be taken home or deposited directly into a recycling receptacle to avoid contact by the greeters.

Parishioners will be encouraged, as they depart, to use the automatic distribution hand sanitizer dispensers.

The Celebrant and other ministers will refrain from handshakes or other signs of physical affection (eg hugs) at the back of the church.

Participants and celebrants will be encouraged to leave immediately.

All Coffee Hours, Common Meals, or other social gatherings are suspended until the appropriate stage of the regathering plan.

### **What if a person tests positive for COVID19?**

In the event that a parishioner tests positive or there is a potential exposure, the identified individual will need to request that the physician or testing site upload to the DC Department of Health [online reporting form](#). The individual should also contact the SSI office. Individuals who test positive should notify the church office and all recommended procedures will be followed. Spanish-speaking congregants may contact the interim clergy or vestry members who speak Spanish.

### Pastoral Offices & Ministries

There will be no Baptisms, Weddings, or the Anointing of the Sick in the church building until future stages. Options for these sacraments involving groups of 10 or less can be made by contacting the interim clergy team.

The nursery will be closed; Childcare and Sunday School will be suspended until future stages.

*The administration of other forms of pastoral care will take place via telephone or video conferencing. Exceptions require the permission of the Bishop.*

Funerals are permitted at the graveside only and limited to a maximum of ten people present until future stages.

### Parish Office & Administrative Procedures

All members of the clergy team and the Parish Administrator must stay home when not feeling well.

The Clergy Team and Parish Administrator are required to self-quarantine according to the directives issued by health authorities in the event that a member of his or her household displays any respiratory symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.

**1> Communications Plan, including plans for a Survey that was recommended by the Vestry in July 2020**

The survey will be distributed via Survey Monkey in both English and Spanish. A paper version will be mailed to people in both English and Spanish. We are concerned that we need to be sure that we reach the entire Spanish speaking community and may ask people to make phone calls or make use of WhatsApp or some other resource.

Surveys that come in ways other than through Survey Monkey will be manually distributed  
As soon as the Vestry approves we will start working on the surveys.

We need to find a way to tabulate responses from the Spanish speaking community and from the English speaking community. We should consider strategies for distributing paper forms of the survey and entering them into manually into the other survey forms.

**2> Regathering timeline, including conditions necessary to proceed through the process of regathering**

We are proposing a staged approach to regathering, beginning with the annual meeting and proceeding in a modest and temperate manner through in-person and on-line gatherings for worship through full engagement. We are proposing that the first event for the parish should be the parish annual meeting. Almost all of the factors that need to be in place for any regathering must be in place prior to any regathering efforts.

**3> A regathering Plan**

We present to the vestry a regathering plan that first addresses the importance of the annual meeting then extends to engaging the parish in a range of in-person and on-line worship. We propose several steps to meeting the spiritual needs of our parishioners while ensuring the safety of our parishioners.

**The questionnaire**

**Greetings and Peace to all Parishioners of Saint Stephen's/San Esteban**

A bilingual, multicultural committee, under the leadership of Patti Brennan has been meeting virtually to work on how to re-gather in-person and also support those who choose to continue to meet and worship virtually. (ADD WHOLE COMMITTEE NAMES)

The Diocese sent all parishes guidance on how to begin to gather in person and to open our buildings again.

As we begin drafting plans to prepare for this re-gathering, we hope that you will answer a few short questions to help us better understand your concerns and needs and how we can best support you.

You can count on SSI to do the following things: requiring masks for all in attendance, having sufficient hand washing services, having enough space for everyone, making sure that there is a safe space for people to enter and exit. We will endeavor to have in person and on-line worship as much as possible.

While our building will remain closed, we want to learn what is important to you about attending worship service in person. We will continue to provide several options including in person and on-line gathering for worship and community. Our collective safety is of utmost importance.

Please note that the layout of the questionnaire will be more user friendly than this appears.

**DRAFT RE-GATHERING SURVEY QUESTIONS**

- How important is it to you to be physically in church for your spiritual well-being? 1-Very Important 2-Somewhat important 3-Neutral 4-Not that important 5-Not important at all
- In order to provide a safe environment, the following list of practices are being considered for use as part of our re-gathering plan. In terms of personal safety and comfort, please rank the importance of each using the following scale:

1-Very Important 2-Somewhat important 3-Neutral 4-Not that important 5-Not important at all

- a. the requirement to make a reservation \_\_\_\_\_
- b. a limited number of congregants \_\_\_\_\_
- c. social distancing \_\_\_\_\_
- d. face coverings all the time \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Instrumental music or one cantor but NO congregational singing \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Holy Communion \_\_\_\_\_
- g. no nursery (ages birth to 3 years old) \_\_\_\_\_
- h. No Godly Play \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Godly Play following CDC-guidelines for childcare \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Other issue(s) that concern you \_\_\_\_\_

- Provided that our parish will implement extensive safety protocols while recognizing that Columbia Heights is currently a hot spot for Covid-19 cases in DC and that a parishioner(s) with active Covid-19 infection might be in attendance, how likely would you be to attend in-person worship services.

1-Very Likely 2 –Likely 3-Neutral 3-Not Likely 4-Very Unlikely

- 1. 5-I do not plan at present to resume attending in-person services at St. Stephens

Please explain your answer in a few words: \_\_\_\_\_

- How willing would you be to receive communion during in-person worship?

1-Very Likely 2 –Likely 3-Neutral 3-Not Likely 4-Very Unlikely

Since the start of the pandemic shutdown, our church has provided a number of new online ministries including;

- Sunday morning and evening YouTube channel prayer,
- Sunday Teens and Tweens programming,
- Wednesday evening Connect moderated by Lisa Luceno,
- Godly Play lessons on YouTube,

- Thursday morning prayer on FaceBook Live,
- Daily Zoom Compline,
- Weekly Spanish language Compline,
- Weekly Choir Zoom meeting with Compline
- WhatsApp groups in both English and Spanish.

What other types of ministries that could nourish your soul would you suggest the church consider:

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If you have children and with CDC guidelines for their care and instruction in place, how likely are you to bring them with you when you first begin attending in-person services?

1-Very Likely 2 –Likely 3-Neutral 3-Not Likely 4-Very Unlikely 5-I do not plan at present to resume attending in-person services at St. Stephens

Which of the following is your age group?

- a. Under 21
- b. 21 – 30
- c. 31 – 40
- d. 41 – 65
- e. 65- 80
- f. Over 80

7. Please provide us with your zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

What else would you like church leadership to know?

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