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APRIL & MAY 2021

# The Evangel

THE TIME HAS COME

*Alleluia! Christ is risen!*

This acclamation is not mere words, but rather the powerful reality I sense as we come off a beautiful, uplifting, and even transformative Holy Week and Easter weekend. Each year the amount of work that goes into planning these services is taxing, and this season the work was amplified with the amount of innovation and creativity we had to employ to make these experiences inclusive and engaging in the midst of continued pandemic restrictions. Thanks to the faithful and tireless work of our staff, Altar Guild, musicians, production team, and so many other ministers, this Easter has positioned us to see God calling us into the renewal of our existing work and the exciting frontier of new ministry and new souls drawn to serve and live within our community. At our most recent Sunday worship, with Bishop Cole's visit and the celebration of baptism, reaffirmation, and eight new members joining us, this growth has been made manifest before our eyes.

It is fitting that, as we celebrate that sense of the resurrection manifest in us and among us, the Vestry, staff, and I have been discerning for several months how and when to restart indoor worship. While some churches in our area have been back for some time, until very recently we at St. Stephen's have had a significant COVID positive rate in our parish that made reopening inside (and for a time, even outside) simply out of the question. Certainly, concern has been expressed that the pandemic is not over, variants of the virus are still out there, and people who are high-risk with regards to their own health must continue to exercise an abundance of caution.

Nevertheless, as I have watched our own COVID numbers drop in the parish and here locally, I have engaged in conversations with other church leaders whose approach to the pandemic I respect and who are now also moving their congregations forward, the time has come for us to take that next step. At our most recent Vestry meeting on April 14, 2021, I laid out a suggested protocol for reopening that has come out of these various conversations over the last few months, along with addressing any concerns that members of the Vestry may have had. I shared with them (as you can also see later in this publication) the results of the survey which indicated a majority of our members were ready to return to indoor worship either immediately or once they were vaccinated (and since I can see the names on the survey, a vast majority of people who are waiting until vaccination are already vaccinated or have begun the process).

*Continued on page 2...*

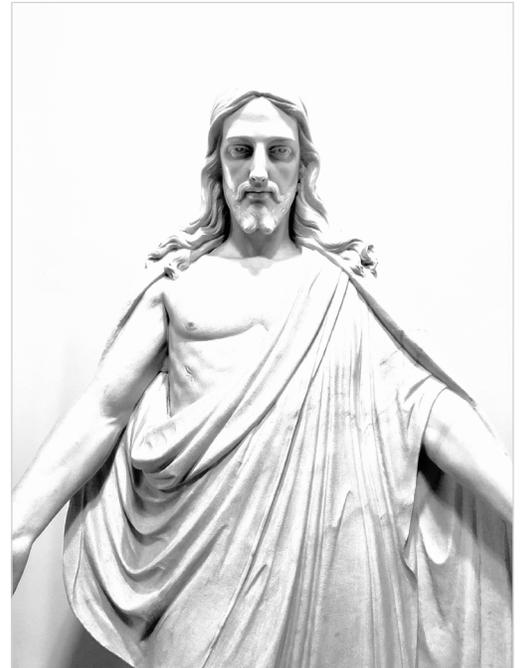
*...Continued from page 1*

While the decision to restart lies with me, I wanted the Vestry's feedback but also their consent and support. With all this information presented, the Vestry agreed unanimously to my proposal to restart indoor worship.

So I am excited to announce that **indoor worship will resume at St Stephen's on SUNDAY, MAY 2, 2021**. Sometime late next week, you will receive by email or snail mail the protocols for indoor worship that will thoroughly cover every detail. I want to stress two things to you right off the bat. **First, worship is not returning to "normal"**. We will have limits to the attendance to start and, as such, we will be instituting a reservation system; masks and social distancing will continue to be required for some time; and we will continue to emphasize to you not to come if you have any symptoms. Second, a good number of you remain uncomfortable with the prospect of returning inside for worship. I want to stress that everyone will have **three options for worship** for the foreseeable future - **indoor, outdoor, and livestream**. The indoor service will be the livestream service, only with some attendance beginning in May, and I remind you that the streaming of our indoor services is a PERMANENT feature here to stay. You will always have the capability to view our main Sunday indoor service from your device at home. Outdoor worship will be a staple at the very least until the fall except on rainy Sundays - in which case the outdoor service will be canceled for that day.

As another worship option, I would like to also restart the **midweek Tuesday 11:30 a.m. Eucharist beginning on Tuesday, May 4, 2021**. If attendance is under 10, we can worship in St. Alban's Chapel. If it is higher than 10, we will need to worship in a larger space that will allow us to spread out. The same communion protocol for Sundays will also apply for this service. As this service is small, reservations will not be required.

We will continue to diligently monitor COVID positivity rates and certainly the effects of any variants that may ultimately turn up in our area. Do not mistake reopening for letting our guard down. It has become apparent to me that we can now worship together safely with restrictions, and these restrictions will gradually lift if positivity rates continue to decline. There are number of opportunities are being presented to us for ways to share our story, be witnesses to God's love and power working among us, and to invite others into fellowship and conversation per the Bishop's charge to us in his sermon this past Sunday. Worshiping in person, while still being very intentional to include those who prefer to engage virtually, equips us to answer the call that rings loud and clear from Easter - *Where and with whom is God calling us to declare the message of His love and saving power?* I ask you to remain creative, energized, and thoughtful toward both your neighbors at St. Stephen's - especially those who may remain isolated as the congregation slowly gathers together - and to those beyond our walls whom God is sending to us and those to whom we are sent. Wherever we may be, may God give us the strength and conviction to proclaim and follow the invitation to live by this conviction:



*The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

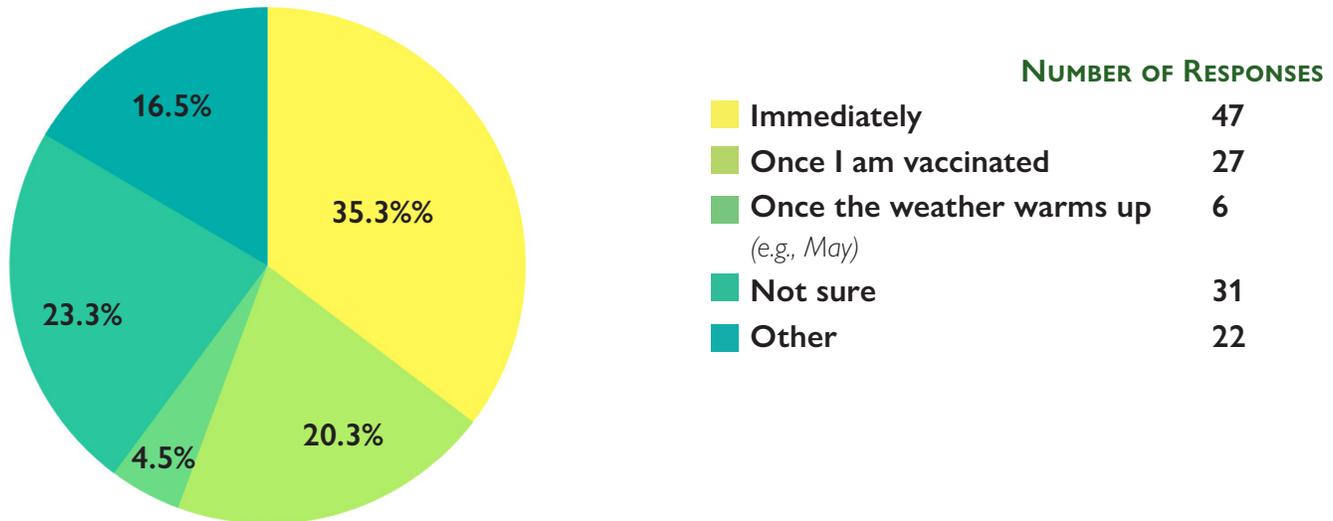
*Christ's Peace,  
Bailey*

# INDOOR WORSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

Well, we asked, and you responded! Below are the results and comments to the parish Indoor Worship Survey. Comments have been edited only to correct misspellings and to remove identifying names.

**TOTAL RESPONSES: 133**

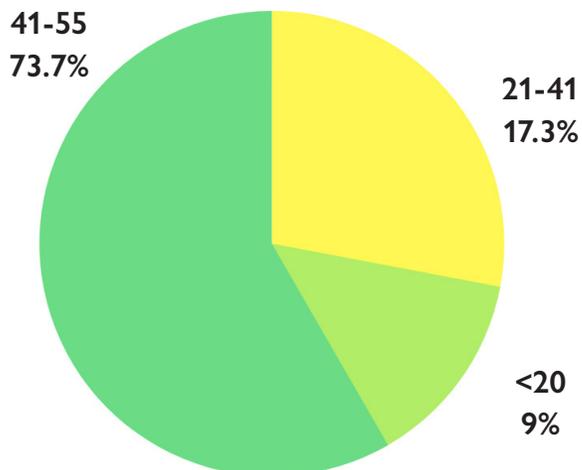
## 1. I WILL BE READY TO RETURN TO INDOOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP:



### COMMENTS TO QUESTION 1:

- After St. Stephen's active parishioners have been COVID-free for several weeks.
- Both when I am vaccinated and the weather warms up
- Following shoulder surgery recovery and a few weeks after second COVID shot
- I am vaccinated but the pandemic will likely still be active for some time.
- Later than May, as vaccinations will not be open to all until May 1 - give time for more vaccinations.
- Not sure what is going to happen with the variants and everyone should have had the vaccines
- Now, but in limited numbers
- Once a sufficient majority of parishioners are vaccinated.
- once it is clear from the CDC that it is safe to gather again.
- Once my husband and I are vaccinated and have "immunity".
- Once the data show another "surge" in infection is unlikely, probably May. If there is another surge in cases I prefer to see the service online.
- Possibly in November
- Still too early for indoor gathering given current situation & numbers
- Sunday after Easter Sunday (4/11)
- Vaccinated, and comfortable with spacing requirements in the nave.
- When CDC guidance says safe. Probably when a significant proportion of attendees are also vaccinated.
- When most of the congregation is vaccinated
- When our COVID numbers are down
- When seating/capacity arrangements are organized.
- When the CDC says it's safe to do so.
- When the statistics show a huge, sustained drop in cases.

2. ONCE WORSHIP RESTARTS IN THE NAVE, I WOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE ATTENDING INITIALLY, IF THE CONGREGATION WAS LIMITED TO (COUNTING WORSHIP LEADERS AND ALTAR PARTY):

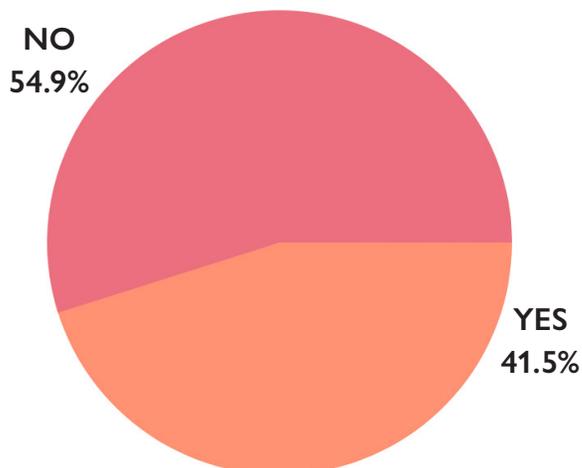


**NUMBER OF RESPONSES**

20 People or less	12
21-41	23
41-55	98

(roughly 25% of our Nave's Capacity)

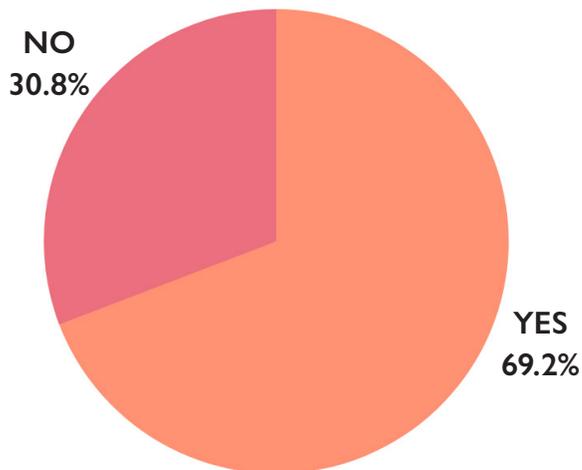
3. MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR SOME TIME IN WORSHIP. WOULD YOU BE MORE LIKELY TO COME IF, IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE PROTOCOL, TEMPERATURE CHECKS AND HEALTH SCREENING QUESTIONS WERE TAKEN AT THE DOOR?



**NUMBER OF RESPONSES**

Yes	60
No	73

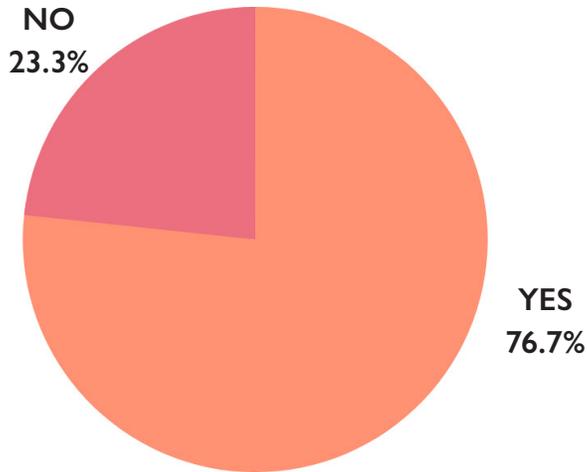
4. WOULD YOU BE COMFORTABLE WITH (MASKED) CONGREGATIONAL SINGING WHEN WE REOPEN INDOORS?



**NUMBER OF RESPONSES**

Yes	92
No	41

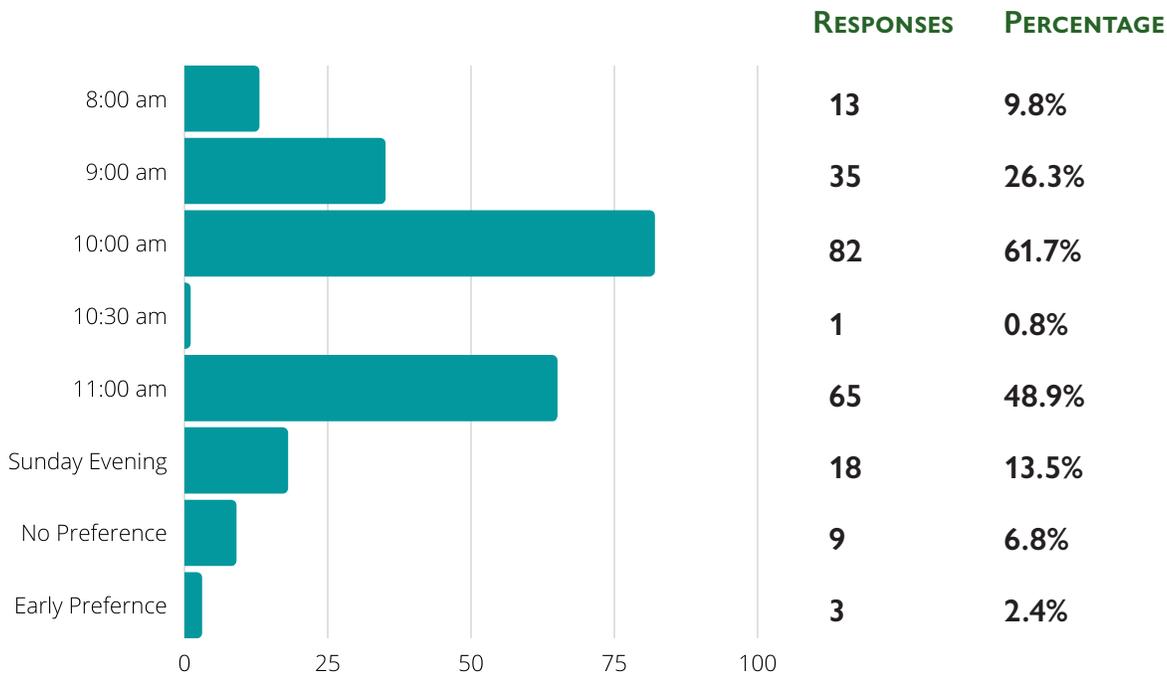
**5. UPON INITIALLY RESTARTING INDOOR WORSHIP, WOULD YOU BE COMFORTABLE IN HAVING IN-PERSON CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN GROUPS OF 10 OR LESS (I.E., NURSERY, CATECHESIS, ADULT CLASSES)?**



**NUMBER OF RESPONSES**

Yes	102
No	31

**6. IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE WE DO NOT EXCEED WHATEVER SEATING QUOTA WE WILL INITIALLY HAVE, WE WILL ASK PEOPLE TO NOTIFY THE PARISH OFFICE IN RESERVING A SPOT FOR THAT PARTICULAR SERVICE. WE WILL ALSO CONSIDER TEMPORARILY ADDING AN ADDITIONAL INDOOR SERVICE IF THE INTEREST IN ATTENDING EXCEEDS THE QUOTA. WITHOUT GUARANTEEING ANY OF THESE TIMES, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR PREFERRED TIME TO WORSHIP ON SUNDAYS?**



## 7. PLEASE SHARE ANY FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS, THOUGHTS, OR CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT RESTARTING INDOOR WORSHIP AT ST. STEPHEN'S. (71 RESPONSES)

- With the number of COVID cases declining and the number of folks getting vaccinated increasing, let's open up and move forward.
- We need further discussion about congregational singing.
- Please continue YouTube postings of indoor services.
- I would not be comfortable doing the Peace in the customary way.
- At this time most of the high-risk population should have had the opportunity to be vaccinated. The daily case count and hospitalization numbers in our area have shown a steady decrease for the past several weeks so I believe that with the precautions outlined above we should be able to resume indoor services in a safe and responsible manner. Though I don't feel it is necessary to actually screen with temperature checks and questions at the door it is reasonable to remind people via signage
- Many of the churches in Oak Ridge have been holding indoor services for months. In regards to question 3 and 4. I don't feel it necessary for additional measures other than the mask. To be honest, I am comfortable without masks. I feel that should be a personal decision. Government overreach is getting out of hand enough as it is.
- You should not count my vote too heavily. Due to family and work pressures I have not been and will not be attending regularly for a while. I am out of town every other Sunday and on the others am trying to keep up with responsibilities
- Outdoors now
- We received our vaccinations in February so feel safe attending services, but would still welcome following safety protocols until everyone has the chance to get the vaccine.
- As we should begin with limited capacity, indoor services should be limited to people who have been fully vaccinated. Even if the entire congregation is eventually vaccinated we should begin with worship services and see what happens before adding education and nursery to in person attendance. I think we will regret even extreme caution far less than we would regret mistakenly reopening a little too soon. There is no real reason to open indoors before fall when it becomes cold. If it is not safe by November/December we could be grateful for gathering carefully during April to November. The number to gather should begin with 20 and grow if that works. If we get to 25% we could allow each eligible attendee 1 Sunday out of 4 and issue "tickets" that could be swapped or donated between individuals and/or an anonymous parish "bank".
- I would be more comfortable if everyone present has been vaccinated.
- I look forward to our return to the nave. I would hope that if we have additional services, that we could have one with contemporary worship. I miss our "old" nine o'clock service and my fellow parishioners who attended that service with me. Having that service in the nave would be lovely. I will volunteer to help in some way to make that happen. What would be needed?
- I truly think it is TOO early for indoor gathering. Even vaccinated, I am not comfortable in groups where I don't know the status of others. I need to see COVID numbers significantly decreasing with vaccination #s significantly increasing before I am ready for larger group gatherings (includes grove services).
- I feel it is too early to meet indoors where I don't know the vaccination status of others. COVID cases are not decreasing enough. I want to see vaccinations increasing and COVID cases declining more before I can consider returning to indoor services.
- Question two limits the capacity so I chose the larger number. Full capacity would be fine with me. My answers are very liberal because I have had two vaccinations and this Friday I will exceed two weeks after second vaccination.
- Have the windows open as long as the temperature remains temperate would help. How about adding the equipment that the schools are adding that cleans the air?
- I would feel more comfortable only allowing seating for every other pew, allowing ourselves to be distanced from other parishioners. Would also prefer people in attendance wear a real fabric or surgical type mask and no

gaiters or bandanas. Keeping masks over nose and chin. Using hand sanitizer when entering the building and exiting. Wiping down surfaces between services.

- Clearly, we need to reopen as soon as it's safe. My reluctance is founded in my circumstances and do not reflect what I think might be best for the parish.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers should be at the entrances. Need a policy on how to handle someone who has a temperature (i.e., send them home, segregate them?)
- Love St. Stephen's
- Looking forward to it.
- Stress that we are entrusting our care to each other so we should not come if we have any potential symptoms. Use disinfectant and wash hands.
- I am in no rush. I want you all to take as many precautions as possible to make sure ALL people are safe and can worship. I will do what I can to keep my family safe.
- TN is currently in IC of its waitlists for vaccines. Soon, age restrictions will be lifted and more people will be vaccinated. I believe, if we wear our masks, social distance, and use common sense, we may go back to indoor worship. Churches in Knox and Roane Counties are open now.
- My daughter's church requires "reservations", and retirees ALWAYS gobble up the available seats! I highly recommend that if we go to "reservations", that they go "live" at a time when working families WITH CHILDREN can also have an opportunity to get spots!
- Would like seating to be every other row with no more than 4 per row.
- I have had both vaccinations and work 3 days a week in the public. As long as masks are required, I would not have any reservations about returning to indoor worship.
- How about doing a temperature check without screening questions? No greeters handing me things. I would like to see only two social units (families) on each pew, for example two couples. Skip every other pew. NO TOUCHING at the peace; stay in your pew and just nod or bow to one another. Serve communion from the floor with social distancing have a chalice bearer on each side of the priest. Continue having the service bulletin available on line so that we don't have to use the hymnals.
- Some of my answers depend on what space would be used for activities other than worship. Adult forum in the undercroft is different than in Pollard. Also, my comfort level will increase as more is known about the effectiveness of the vaccines on the variants.
- My answer to Question 2 is it depends...
- I would feel more comfortable if everyone was vaccinated - may not be possible.
- Great! I Can't wait.
- I am concerned about returning to church before everyone has the option of being vaccinated. Since vaccinations are being given out by age at the current time, some who have not had the opportunity to be vaccinated may not feel comfortable with returning to in-person church. Asking those folks to decide about returning without having the opportunity for vaccination does not seem equitable to me.
- CDC guidance would supersede some selections made above. If the CDC says it's safe, then I'm okay with that. I'd like to know that COVID variants are a non-issue. Overall, I would rather err on the side of caution. Were a majority of parishioners vaccinated, I would feel safe resuming in-person indoor worship. I'd have fewer worries with an outdoor service. Because we will continue to have virtual services, then those who feel safe may return sooner while the rest of us take our time or just continue to participate from home.
- I think initially a sense of the number attending who have been vaccinated might be helpful or restricting certain services to those who are vaccinated. Some folks may feel better about attending if that was the standard for a particular service.
- I don't think it will be a problem, but I would suggest guidelines to make sure mask wearing and social distancing are actually enforced - masks worn below the nose might as well not be worn at all.
- I have a multitude of health issues. I will be vaccinated fully March 24, will take an additional 3 weeks for antibody development. I would want to be masked and socially distanced, with all those attending, the same. No singing. Outdoor services are preferable to me, still with masks except for the Eucharist.

- For me this is a personal safety decision. I (we) will come back depending on the future status of the virus. The threat is substantially diminished now and deaths are down but if this turns around we will maintain our current isolation practice.
- I ready any time there is an opening.
- This survey is very limiting. We would be comfortable with 100 people
- I would have liked a question on how many have received the vaccine
- I will attend regardless of the decisions made regarding protocol. I trust people to make the best decision for themselves and their fellow parishioners.
- I am going to be very careful about returning. It's all so up in the air, it's hard to answer at this point.
- I am looking forward to indoor worship and rejoining the choir!
- No real conflicts
- Ready to return two weeks after full vaccination.
- I would hope that those in attendance would confirm their vaccinations
- I have had both COVID shots, but I hesitate to make that a requirement for being allowed into the building. I don't get up early enough to attend morning services, but I love being able to participate via computer. Continuing to have that option available would allow those who are unable or uncomfortable attending in person to share the experience with those who are actually there.
- Question 2: I would prefer that it is a full congregation
- I would like to see designated seating spots, well-separated both between and within pews.
- Transmission rate in the community should be watched carefully before opening. Thank you.
- I think masks should be mandatory. No exceptions. If someone refuses or is unable to wear a mask, they should be encouraged to watch the YouTube service.
- Question 5 - Depends on room size.
- We are ready to begin attending indoors again immediately. The adults in our family will be fully vaccinated by early April. Our family also already had the COVID-19, thankfully recovered, and are still testing for antibodies through work. We see the value of masks and social distancing, of course, but I have not seen a lot of value in the temperature checks and screening questions. I think people have been conditioned enough over the last year to not attend if they cannot answer the questions favorably. Also, when our family had the virus, we did not have fevers and have not heard of many people who tested positive and did have a fever. At the same time, we have no problem with taking those precautions if it makes others feel more comfortable. We look forward to seeing everyone again.
- My answer to Question 2 assumes there will be ushered/assigned seating to ensure maximum space between worshippers. My answer to Question 3 does not mean I'm not concerned about transmission; screenings may be unnecessary since we can (probably? maybe? surely?) depend on our parishioners to police themselves re: fever and exposure concerns. I'm guessing that you will stipulate that protocol. Question 5 depends on space arrangements and capacity limits. For children, perhaps consider local school district guidelines re: space for seating and participation. Elementary students wear masks all day at school. Preschoolers (at ORS Preschool) do not. I am also interested in our parish vaccination percentage; can we have a survey to measure that? If parishioners are concerned about privacy, is it possible for answers to be completely anonymous, even to you? Personally, I don't care who knows I've been vaccinated, but others may feel differently. I may be tilting at windmills here since, considering our parish's general age and general trust in science, perhaps we can assume a high vaccination rate.
- We are flexible and really want what is best for the majority of the parish to feel comfortable restarting indoor worship.
- I think the Church has done an outstanding job handling the pandemic and have truly appreciated the streaming services. I am also very thankful and appreciative that Father Bailey is here.
- Let's try to follow the experts (Dr. Fauci, and others) guidance if possible although somewhat ambiguous.

- My thoughts: I am concerned about indoor worship happening too soon, and the need to backpedal. I am worried about people immediately attending worship right after having their vaccine (either first or second) without allowing for the appropriate time for immunity to be built. I think there is a lot of emotion about the whole pandemic: how it's been handled nationally, and how we've handled at St. Stephen's. I worry that people will use the re-opening as an opportunity to vent their frustrations. My child expressed some concerns: 1. People may not be able to hear the Lector well because of the masks. 2. If a child has COVID and has no symptoms - they could pass it to the teacher or to other parents.
- Health permitting
- Question 2: Socially apart. Question 4: Socially Distanced. I can't wait until we can have indoor services. Thank you.
- I have been enjoying worshipping at the streaming service. You all are doing a wonderful job. The Tuesday AM Bible study group is small enough that we were social distancing without realizing it. We sat far apart. I miss the fellowship and opportunity to learn from this group.
- We might only come if Catechesis was available, at least for our children, especially during the sermon. Older kids can sit through the service quietly.
- I think that if people use good common sense - don't come if you're sick, good hand washing practices, wear masks when in the presence of others, etc. - we can be safe. I also think that at some point we have to try to get back to some sense of normal. I can't imagine a world where I have to wear a mask forever, and never get to see someone's smile. So sad!
- All answers are subject to change as there are changes in the numbers of active cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in Anderson County.
- Q2: I would feel comfortable with 41-55 people, or even more, especially if done with any time of social distancing. I've heard of congregations having 40-50% of capacity with social distancing. Q3: will come with or without temp checks, etc. Q7: Start indoor worship ASAP and please have services indoors from Tenebrae Wednesday through Easter Sunday and/or Easter Monday are my 2 main concerns either with or without any other conditions or limitations. Also, thanks for such an excellent way of contacting us on these issues!!

## LOOKING AHEAD TO ASCENSION DAY AND PENTECOST

Ascension and Pentecost both fall in May this year. Even though it is a major feast day, Ascension almost always gets lost. According to the Episcopal Church website ([www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org)), "The occasion on which the risen Christ is taken into heaven after appearing to his followers for forty days (Acts 1:1-11, Mk 16:19). The Ascension marks the conclusion of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. It is the final elevation of his human nature to divine glory and the near presence of God. The Ascension is affirmed by the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. The Ascension is celebrated on Ascension Day, the Thursday that is the fortieth day of the Easter season. It is a principal feast of the church year in the Episcopal Church." **Ascension Day falls on Thursday, May 13, 2021**, and we will provide a pre-recorded video for this feast day.

**The Day of Pentecost is on Sunday, May 23, 2021**, is one of the seven principal feasts of the church year and is the last liturgical season. Frequently known as the "long green growing season", Pentecost means the "fiftieth day".

In the Old Testament, it was known as the Feast of Weeks, the time of harvesting the first fruits. In the New Testament, it refers to the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. In our tradition, the liturgical color for the Pentecost is red, but the day is also known as Whitsunday, a contraction of "White Sunday", reflecting the custom by which those who were baptized at the Vigil of Pentecost would wear their white baptismal garments to church on the Day of Pentecost.



"The Ascension" (1496-1500) by Pietro Perugino (1448-1523)  
Musée des beaux-arts de Lyon  
Public Domain

# April & May Celebrations

## BIRTHDAYS

4/1	Caroline Swilley	5/1	Gary Grubb
4/2	Chris Kirk	5/2	Kay Brookshire
4/6	Margaret Baldauf Gavin Madgett		Kathy Chippendale
4/7	Marcia Todkill		Carolyn Singer
4/11	Noah Baker Carole Mol	5/4	Bob Bardorf
4/12	Vicky White	5/6	Cyril Meredith, III
4/14	Mary Anne King Jack Campbell	5/8	Teddy Dantzler
4/15	Carol Slusher	5/9	Cameron Ellis
4/17	Carey Land	5/11	Asher Berven
4/18	Lillian Hise	5/12	Robert Giuliano Delaney Thurston
4/20	Fay Martin Irma Brown	5/15	Ada LaRose
4/21	Lynn Giuliano	5/18	Dora Marmon Tailen DiGregorio
4/25	Don Nalls	5/19	Lisa Plante
4/26	Drew Shane	5/20	Lilly Cooper Jeff Thurston
4/26	Jean Bardorf	5/21	Scott Chippendale
4/30	Nancy Anderson Jacob Berven	5/22	Lou Volk
		5/25	Dan Tuxbury Jonathan Kruzik Cecelia Moore
		5/26	Peggy DeVan Vivian Cooper Liam LaRose
		5/27	Roger Johnson
		5/28	Emma Sanchez-Ihli Emma Ellis
		5/29	Elizabeth Pack
		5/31	Autumn Ihli

## ANNIVERSARIES

4/1	Kay Brookshire & Tom Beehan
4/9	Peggy & Lou Volk
4/11	Frances & Jim Hodges
4/14	Carol & Walt Gardner
4/18	Beth & Ed Stickle
5/8	Mary & Wayne Rhoades
5/11	Nancy & David Caldwell
5/14	Jenny & Cyril Meredith, III
5/18	Fay & Murray Martin
5/22	Happy & Ed Johnson Diane & Donny Sams
5/29	Mary Ellen & Eph Klots



Where God is seen, love is felt, lives are changed!

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